

Things We Wish For

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Things We Wish For

by [avioleta](#)

Summary

Harry blinks. Blinks again. It doesn't make sense. It's simply not possible. But yet... "Snape?" It's not the Snape Harry knows or remembers. Not the Snape Harry grieved. But he would know that face, that profile, those eyes anywhere. "What happened?" he manages. "How are you here?"

Notes

Thank you to Torino and Lilyeyes. You run the best fests in fandom. To Badgerlady. I could never finish a fic without your edits. And to my prompter. I hope you enjoy. Severus is seventeen when this story begins. While the explicit sexual content occurs after he turns eighteen, there is clear sexual tension before then.

Prompt No. 24 from **maraudersaffair**: One night Professor Potter stumbles upon teenage Severus at Hogwarts. Reason for time travel up to you.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Harry has always loved Hogwarts at night.

It's cool now, and quiet as he walks towards the dungeons. The portraits, for the most part, are asleep. Some glare at him, grumbling, turning away from his wand light, as he passes, but the hallways are deserted. Everyone should be in bed.

He likes patrolling the corridors after curfew. It reminds him of when he was a student, though he doesn't need his cloak now, of course. The echo of his steps against the stone floor is the only sound as he reaches the Potions wing. One classroom door is open; green light spills out into the hall from the windows inside.

He steps into the room, careful to make some noise in case any students are in there, snogging or otherwise doing things they shouldn't. He's accidentally stumbled upon students in various stages of undress before, and it's not something he cares to repeat. But the classroom is empty.

It's peaceful and, while he will always prefer the airy openness of the towers, he thinks he understands why the Slytherins feel so at home here in the depths of the castle. Harry looks out the window. There's no sign of the giant squid. Even the lake is quiet at this time of night.

He leaves the room, closing the door behind him. There's a light on in the Potions office. Professor O'Connor is awake. He slips past quietly so as not to disturb her.

As he passes the bare stretch of wall concealing the Slytherin dormitories, the passage leading to the common room is revealed. Professors don't need the passwords to get into the dorms any more. Minerva changed that—along with several other of the more questionable castle rules—citing myriad legitimate safety concerns.

Dumbledore's portrait had looked on. "Need I remind you that we made it through the better part of ten centuries and not one but two wars with our House rules intact? And no one was any worse for wear because of it. Why you feel the need to alter tradition now, Minerva? Frankly, I can't recall a single instance where student safety was compromised in my entire—"

Snape hadn't been able to keep his mouth shut at that point. "For Circe's sake, Albus! Need I remind *you* of our own pictorial statuses? To suggest that our tenures as Headmaster were not marred by considerable—"

"Now, now, Severus," Dumbledore had cut him off. "Surely you don't believe that either of us would have escaped our admittedly unfortunate fates had professors had access to House common rooms indiscriminately."

"Of course not. I haven't yet lost all of my sense." His glare suggested he believed Dumbledore, perhaps, had. "But merely because things have always been done a certain way does not mean that is the way they should always be done."

"Thank you, Severus," Minerva had said fondly, ending the faculty meeting and leaving Dumbledore and Snape arguing in their frames.

Portrait Dumbledore bothers Snape no end. More than once, he's demanded Minerva remove him to the solitary confines of his dungeons. Harry smiles sadly. In the past nine years, so much has changed and yet... After Voldemort's defeat, there was a large and fairly vocal contingent arguing for the dissolution of Slytherin House. The same voices called for mandatory registration of all Slytherins, past and present. Harry spoke out vehemently against the idea. It was far too reminiscent of the Muggleborn Registration Committee and would do nothing to start healing the wounds left over from the war. Calmer heads, thankfully, prevailed and, under Kingsley's leadership, all punitive and prejudicial legislation based on House affiliation or blood status was removed from the Wizengamot's docket.

Still, Slytherin remains the smallest House. After the war, some students did not return. And, with each new year, fewer students seem to sort Slytherin—either because traditionally Slytherin families aren't sending their children to Hogwarts or students are asking to be Sorted elsewhere. As

Harry knows, the Hat listens.

They won the war. And, for that, Harry will forever be thankful. But he can't help but wish that some things could have been different. They lost so much, and the grief—though dulled some with each passing year—makes Harry wonder what if...

What else could he have done?

Who else could he have saved?

Harry closes his eyes. The students are all safely in their dormitories. He should go to bed.

As he reaches the stairs, he feels it. A gust of cold air. A rush of magic. It pulses in his bloodstream and, for just a moment, takes his breath away.

He turns around and, there, in the hallway, outside the entrance to the Slytherin common room, stands a student. Harry holds up his wand, his Lumos illuminating the corridor. The boy is bent over at the waist, his dark hair obscuring his face. His white school shirt untucked, black trousers wrinkled.

"It's well past curfew," Harry says. "You know I'll have to take points."

The boy looks up, dark eyes narrowed, "Potter?" He sounds confused.

But then he straightens and Harry can tell from the set of his shoulders that he's angry; he's practically shaking. "What the fuck did you do to me?" he hisses, and Harry takes a step back, startled. Sure, he's had students talk back to him before, but rarely do they show such disrespect unprovoked.

He's just about to reprimand him, to take points for language, to remind him that it's *Professor* Potter, when the boy steps forward into the light.

Harry blinks. Blinks again. It doesn't make sense. It's simply not possible. But yet... "Snape?"

"Who the *bloody fuck* do you think it is?"

It's not the Snape Harry knows or remembers. Not the Snape Harry *grieved*. But he would know that face, that profile, those eyes anywhere. *Memories from a Pensieve forever burned across his vision.*

"What happened?" he manages. "How are you here?"

"Seriously?" Snape raises his wand. "Tell me *what the fuck* you did to me."

Harry takes a deep breath. This isn't... He can't. But a very real teenage Snape is standing before him and he has to do something. He makes a show of putting his wand in his pocket then raises his hands, palms up. "It's all right. You're all right. I didn't do anything to you—"

"The fuck you didn't. I was in my room, getting ready for bed, and now I'm here."

"Severus..." Harry tries to force his voice to remain calm, though his heart is pounding in his ears. What the hell happened? There is magic here, deep in the castle, but he feels nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing that could raise the dead or bring someone thirty years into the future.

He senses what the boy is going to do, can see enough in the low flickering light of the dungeons to know. Harry waves a hand, wordlessly disarming him before the spell can leave his lips.

Harry sees the way Snape's eyes widen, hears his quick intake of breath. "What the— How did you?"

"I am not James Potter," he says. "I am his son. Something has happened, and you need to come with me."

The gargoyle steps aside without question; Harry sent a Patronus ahead so they are expected.

A fire burns brightly in the hearth. Minerva stands before it, arms folded, dressing gown pulled tight across her chest. "Harry," she says, turning, "what's so important that could not wait until morning?"

He steps aside and Minerva sees the young Snape behind him. She gasps. "Severus?" she says softly, disbelief clear in her voice. The colour drains from her face.

"Professor McGonagall," Snape says warily. Harry can feel his discomfort, his uncertainty. But he stands up straight. Looks Minerva in the eyes.

"Harry..." she says. "What is the meaning of this? What have you done?"

"Nothing!"

At this, Snape glares, looks at Harry accusingly.

"I didn't *do* anything," Harry insists. "I was making my rounds, and when I passed the Slytherin rooms, I felt something. A chill. Some magic. Nothing alarming, but then he was just...there."

Minerva frowns. She looks at Snape for a long moment as though expecting him to disappear. Harry understands. This entire thing is horrifyingly surreal.

"Severus," Minerva says gently. She takes a tentative step towards him, cautiously as though not to startle a skittish animal. "Is it really you?"

"Who else would it be, *Professor?*" The last word is bitten out as though it's difficult to say, as though he wants very much to say something else.

Harry can only imagine.

Then Snape tilts his head, looks around. "Where's Professor Dumbledore?"

Harry sees Minerva's flinch, recognises the sadness that flickers in her eyes, though she hides it well. Harry just feels nauseated.

"Because *he*..." Snape shoots another accusing glare at Harry, "looks like Potter, but he's not. And he says he's his son. But that's *impossible*. Unless I'm in some other dimension or another time. Which is ridiculous, of course. But if anyone can tell me what's going on, it's Dumbledore."

Minerva hesitates.

"Professor Dumbledore is dead," Harry says. It's been nearly ten years and the words still hurt. "I'm sorry."

Snape's eyes go wide, but he schools his expression again expertly. "What do you mean? What happened? He's old, sure, but—"

“There was a war.” Harry doesn’t offer anything else. Even if he wanted to give this Snape more information—which he doesn’t—he can’t. The most foolish of wizards know the dangers of meddling with time. Harry is not a fool. And he has no idea what’s happened here.

Minerva summons a teapot and three cups, but Harry shakes his head. She puts a gentle hand on young Snape’s shoulder and guides him to a chair. He sits and takes the tea she pours, clutching it between his palms. But he does not drink.

Minerva also sits down. Her skin is pale, but her hand only shakes slightly as she picks up her own teacup. “Severus,” she says after a moment, voice soft, coaxing. “Will you tell us what happened? What do you remember?”

He looks over his shoulder, as though wondering why Harry is still standing there. And Harry tries to smile in a way that is reassuring, that is not like James. But it feels more like a grimace.

Snape looks back to Minerva. “I don’t know. I was in my dorm. And then I wasn’t.”

“And did you feel anything? Anything at all?”

“No,” Snape says, frowning. “No pull. No tug. Nothing.”

“Neither Apparition nor a Portkey could cause this,” Harry says, though, of course, Minerva knows.

She nods. “And you felt no magic? No spells.”

“No.” Snape takes a deep breath. “You have to tell me what’s going on. Because there hasn’t been a war and he’s not James Potter, and I’m...” He breaks off, looking down. His hands are clasped together so hard his knuckles are white and Harry realises how terrifying this must be for him. He wants to put a hand on his shoulder, reassure him that everything will be all right. But he knows the gesture would not be welcomed. And he’s not sure things *will* be all right, and, even if he were, he doesn’t think Snape would believe him.

“How old are you?” Minerva asks, voice calm, gentle.

Snape looks at her as though she’s lost her mind, but he answers. “Seventeen.”

Minerva exhales shakily. “And what year is it?”

“It’s 1977. Are you going to tell me what’s happened now?”

“I don’t know,” Minerva answers honestly. She sets her teacup down. “But the year is 2007, not 1977, and you have not been a student here for some time.”

“That’s not...2007... It’s not possible.” Snape looks down at his hands; they’re tucked between his knees. His dark hair falls forward, obscuring his face, and he’s rocking back and forth. A coping mechanism, clearly. “Time-Turners can take you back in time, but not forward again.” He laughs, the sound harsh, shrill in the quiet of the room. “And I haven’t got one, anyhow. There are certain magical objects... Documented instances of time travel, but everything takes you to the past. Nothing moves you forward in time.” He looks up again. “Nothing. And certainly not thirty bloody years.” Snape scrubs a hand across his face, presses his fingers to his temples.

He’s right, but of course he is. Severus Snape, even at seventeen, is still Severus Snape.

“Yes,” Harry agrees.

“Then tell me what the fuck happened to me. Because unless I’m dreaming or I’ve somehow slipped into some alternate reality or dimension—which I haven’t”—he adds, “then something is very wrong.”

“Alternate or parallel realities must be maintained,” Harry says. “You can’t just happen along one or fall into another dimension accidentally.”

“Obviously.” Snape actually rolls his eyes. The look he gives Harry is scathing.

Harry nearly laughs; his expression would rival the old Snape any day.

“And I would feel it too, besides. The magic here feels...” Snape closes his eyes. “Well, while not exactly the same, it feels right, and I know enough about magic to know that it wouldn’t feel that way if I were no longer in my correct reality.”

Harry looks to Minerva and nods. He doesn’t know what’s happened, cannot explain it. But he knows what *he* felt, and if this Snape says he did not feel any magic, he believes him.

“If you’d allow us, Mr. Snape,” Minerva says then, “we should perform some detection spells. See if we can begin to understand what’s happened here.”

“Not him,” Snape says. He does not look at Harry. Minerva goes to object. “Professor Potter is our Defence teacher. He was an Auror before, and his capabilities are—”

But Harry shakes his head, stopping her. “It’s all right,” he says. “Start with *Finite*. He can’t say he blames Snape. If he were in his position, he’d likely feel the same way. After all, why would he trust him? And it’s not worth arguing over.

Minerva draws her wand, moves her hand in a short loop. Nothing happens, though Harry hadn’t really expected anything to.

“Now *Priori*.” Nothing. “*Aparecium* and *Deletrius*.” Harry crosses his arms over his chest. Watches as Minerva casts each spell.

Appare Vestigium.

Revelio.

Reverte.

Surgito...

Between the war, and Horcrux hunting, three years of Auror training and a Defence Mastery, Harry knows a lot of detection spells. Still he has almost exhausted his extensive repertoire when—

Snape jerks. “What was that?”

Harry frowns and moves a step closer. “May I?” he asks, drawing his wand.

Snape frowns considering, then nods.

Harry repeats the last spell Minerva cast, feels the press of lingering magic being pulled out into the air.

Both Snape and Minerva are watching him closely, waiting.

Harry casts the spell again.

Snape inhales sharply. “What is it?”

“Wish magic.”

“And what does that mean?” Snape asks after a long moment when no one has said anything.

“I’m not entirely sure, but,” Harry looks at Minerva, “I think we should call Hermione.”

Hermione Floos over first thing in the morning. She would have come the night before, had Harry asked, but it was well after midnight and whatever had happened to bring Snape here was going to require all of their focus. It wouldn’t be solved in the middle of the night.

Minerva had a guest room prepared for Snape, though Harry doubts he slept.

He certainly didn’t.

Wish magic—if that’s what’s happened—is complicated. And, while it’s not exactly rare, wish magic of this magnitude is practically unheard of.

They meet in the Headmistress’s office. Minerva has asked Filius to join them.

Discretion is crucial. Harry doesn’t want to think about what could happen should word get out. Should the wrong person find that Severus Snape is somehow back from the dead...or here from the past. But if they’re truly dealing with wish magic, then Filius’s expertise could prove useful, and they can trust him.

Professor Flitwick taught Snape and, later, when Snape returned to Hogwarts as Potions Master, Harry knows, they were friends. Like Minerva, he believed Harry when he explained that Snape was working with Dumbledore—and for the Light—all along. He grieved Snape’s death, and he helped Harry as he worked to get him pardoned, his name cleared.

Filius, to his credit, is calm. His face gives nothing away—as though it’s perfectly expected and normal to have a teenaged Severus Snape alive and well and here in Minerva’s office.

“Severus, dear boy,” he says, “how good it is to see you.”

Snape nods politely. “Professor.”

Harry wants to know what he’s thinking. On the surface he appears composed, deliberately deferential, as he stands with his head bowed, hands in his pockets. But the Snape he knew was a master at concealing his emotions. His life, the war—at times everything—depended on it. And Harry wonders when he began learning Occlumency. Neuromancy is both a talent and a skill. And Harry has no doubt that, even as a teenager, Snape demonstrated some proficiency.

Harry meets Hermione’s eyes. She hasn’t moved from her place by the fireplace. She’s been watching Snape, lips pressed together, expression neutral. She hides it well, but Harry can see her shock in the set of her shoulders, the tension in her spine. He told her, of course, when he Firecalled that morning, but it’s difficult to believe the impossible—even when you’re seeing it with your own eyes.

“This is Hermione Granger-Weasley,” Harry says. “She’s an Unspeakable. She heads a team in the

Department of Mysteries and, I think, if you'll allow her to cast some detection spells on you, she might be able to help."

Snape looks at her for a long moment, dark eyes critical. Then he nods. Hermione exhales the breath she's holding.

"All right then." She smiles. "If you'll just—" She motions for Snape to stand in front of Minerva's desk. "You might feel some tingling, the press of my magic—"

"I know what detection magic feels like," Snape says.

"Oh. Right then." Hermione forces another smile and begins casting a series of spells similar to what Harry had Minerva cast, though there's variation here. She's adapted some to suit her magic. And the Unspeakables have magic Harry doesn't. Hermione is creative and strong. She's always been a talented witch, and it's clear how her time in the Department of Mysteries has increased her power and her precision. Harry watches her movements, listens to the soothing lilt of her voice, waits to see what her spells pick up.

After several minutes, a string of silver characters appears in the air above Snape's head. Hermione pauses, looking. Casts a different spell. Then another. And lowers her wand.

"You're right, Harry," she says. "This is wish magic."

"I've never seen wish magic like this before," Filius says. "It shouldn't be possible."

"No," Hermione agrees. She walks around Snape as though an alternative explanation might suddenly appear. "Mr. Snape," she says after a moment, "you told professors McGonagall and Potter that you didn't cast any spells or feel any magic."

"No. I didn't," Snape confirms.

"Were you thinking of anything specific at the time? Something that you wanted. Something you have wished for?"

"Right, because if I were capable of such...*substantial* wish magic, my first course of action would be to blink myself out of my own existence. To transport myself thirty years into the future with no way of knowing what would happen when I did—or if I could even survive the magic." Snape rolls his eyes. "Sure. That sounds like something I would do. Do you think I'm an idiot?"

Harry can't help but laugh because even now, despite everything, this Snape sounds so much like the Snape he once knew that it makes his chest ache. "No, no," he says. "Quite the opposite really. We know you're not an idiot. Far from it."

At this, Snape frowns, a speculative expression on his face. "You know...? That means you know me from this time. Am I—?"

Fuck. Merlin, Harry's the idiot here.

But Hermione interjects quickly, saving him from saying something even more foolish. "We shouldn't talk about that. We all know the dangers. The less Mr. Snape knows about this time, the better, until we know for certain what's happened. Until we—"

"Until you find out if you can send me back," Snape says.

Hermione regards him for a moment. "Yes."

Snape sits down in the chair across from Minerva's desk. His shoulders are slumped, his head down. He looks tired. And he looks...sad. This startles Harry, though of course, it shouldn't, considering what's happened. Harry hasn't yet managed to wrap his head around it.

He wonders if the boy's in shock. That's likely. Maybe they should call Poppy.

"So what do we do?" Harry asks because there has to be a way to fix this.

"I'll see what I can find," Hermione says. "But this magic..." she trails off, looking at Snape again and then back to Harry, Minerva, and Filius, "this magic shouldn't be possible."

"Wish magic is like intention magic, right?" Harry asks, and both Filius and Hermione nod.

"You'd like some nice scotch," Filius says, "and suddenly your glass is full."

"Or," Minerva offers, "you remember you have an excellent bottle saved in your cupboard."

"Of course," Filius chuckles, but the sound is strained.

"You don't like your new haircut," Harry says, "so you look in the mirror and it's back to the way it was before."

"Exactly," Hermione says. Or you desperately want to excel on an exam, and you find you're able to revise all night."

"The stronger the wizard or witch, the more powerful the wish magic can be," Filius says. "The more capable he or she is of performing and controlling it, and of deliberately desiring things into effect."

"But any wish magic must still be possible within the rules, the confines of our world," Hermione adds.

"That's the crux of it, isn't it?" Harry says. "Wish magic is still rooted in our existing magic. Even if the wizard performing the magic might not be otherwise knowingly capable of the spell, he has the potential. Before I even knew I had magic, I once wished myself onto the schoolhouse roof when trying to escape Dudley and his gang, and I disappeared the glass at the zoo one time to let out a python..."

Snape looks up at that, eyebrows raised, but he looks down again without speaking.

"But that was all magic I was capable of—even if I didn't know it yet."

"Yes," says Minerva. "Scotch can be summoned. Hair regrown. Wizards can levitate, can Apparate, and objects can be vanished. You can take a potion for focus or energy or memory..."

"But you can't travel thirty years forward in time," Harry finishes softly.

"No," Hermione says. "Time travel in general is exceptionally complicated but, at least, when a wizard moves backwards in time, his correct timeline still exists. And that movement is limited. Restricted to hours usually, or days. At times, weeks, but never years. The farther back the wizard travels, the more unstable the time stream. The greater the risk. The greater the likelihood he does not survive or cannot return. But moving forward..." She shakes her head.

Harry understands. This Snape's time no longer exists, even if there were a way to send him back. Nineteen seventy-seven passed long ago.

Snape hasn't moved. He doesn't look up at all. Something in Harry's chest clenches.

"But if there's something, anything at all, it will be in the Department of Mysteries. My team has complete access. And I can—"

"I'm dead..."

Hermione stops. They all turn to Snape. He's staring at the wall ahead, expression oddly calm. They turn their heads, following his gaze.

"I'm sorry, dear?" Minerva asks. But Harry knows.

The portraits.

How could they have been so careless? Of course Snape would notice; it's a wonder he didn't last night.

Though the frame is currently empty, Harry can read the engraved plaque affixed below clearly.

Severus Snape, 1960-1998

Headmaster, 1997-1998

"I'm dead," Snape repeats. "And," he chews on his lip, considering, "I was Headmaster?"

"Yes," Harry says carefully. "Before his death, Dumbledore specifically choose you as his successor."

"But I only..." He frowns, trailing off. "It makes sense, though. I'd wondered where my correct self in this time was. And this—" he gestures to the empty portrait— "fixes the potential paradox. Magic doesn't like those much." He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, before opening them again. "What happened? How do I die?"

"You know we can't tell you that."

"Right," Snape says. "Of course. Not until you know if you can send me back." He stands. "I think... I just need some time."

Filius reaches out, goes to stop him as turns to the door, but Snape shakes him off.

"Please," he says, and Harry hears the desperation there. "I need..." He takes a deep breath, hands clenched at his sides, and Harry wonders what it's taking for him not to fall apart. He would likely be hysterical by now. Or catatonic. But Snape only exhales and says, "I'm sorry but I need some air, and I'd like to be alone for a while." And then he slips through the door.

"Should we go after him?" Minerva says as they listen to the sound of his steps retreating down the spiral stairs.

"No," Harry says. "He's not stupid. I don't think he'll do anything rash."

"We can't know that," Hermione says. "And if he—"

"I know, I know," Harry says, cutting her off. "But going after him will almost assuredly cause him to react poorly. He's going to have to trust us, to believe we want to help, and I think..." He shakes his head. "Well, I can't begin to imagine what he's feeling right now, but I believe him when he says he needs some time. He's clever. He knows what's at risk. He won't do anything—"

“Clever, yes,” Minerva says. “But Severus at seventeen was dangerous, too, Harry. You know this.”

Harry exhales; he suddenly feels very tired. “Yes. Do you know when he took the Mark?”

Minerva shakes her head. “No.”

“Okay. I’ll go find him, but let’s give him a minute. It will be all right.” He sits down. “It has to be all right.”

“I know,” Hermione says gently. She rests a hand on Harry’s shoulder and he reaches up to cover it with his own.

“But...” Harry says, because even though he doesn’t wish to admit it, he already knows. Filius does too; Harry can tell from the look on his face.

“But,” Hermione finishes, “I’ll do everything I can, but that’s just it—I’m not certain we actually *can* send him back.”

“Fuck,” Harry says, leaning forward, clasping his hands together. His knuckles are white; he’s shaking.

“Wizards can’t move forward in time,” she continues. “With the exception of some documented cases of astral projection, in which a witch or wizard leaves his corporal body behind in his own time to visit a future temporarily, it just isn’t done.”

“Time travel in and of itself is some of the most complex and dangerous magic we know,” Filius says. “And young Mr. Snape’s time no longer exists.”

Minerva exhales shakily, but her face remains carefully blank. “How did this happen? How is it that he is here?”

“I don’t know,” Hermione says.

“Severus Snape was one of the most powerful wizards of our time,” Filius says. “His magic was quite unmatched—aside from Albus, Tom Riddle, and, of course, you.” He looks to Harry. “But even if he were capable of casting such a spell—which I do not think he was, especially at seventeen—I am quite certain he would not do it.”

“I have to agree,” says Minerva. “Severus, even at that age, while misguided, was calculating and meticulous to an extreme. I simply cannot see him—”

“I did it.”

“What?”

Harry looks up. “I did it. It’s the only explanation.”

“What are you talking about, Harry?” Hermione asks.

“Last night, when I was making my rounds. I was down in the dungeons and I was thinking about the war. About everything that happened. Everything we lost. And what I could have done differently.” He scrubs a hand across his face, “I can’t help but think that I could have done more. And sometimes I wish things had turned out differently.”

Later, Harry finds Snape in his room; he's curled up on the bed, knees pulled to his chest.

Harry glances around. The guest suites at Hogwarts are small, but nicely appointed. This one looks out over the Quidditch pitch and, with its high, arched window, is filled with late-afternoon sunlight.

When he left Minerva's office that morning, Harry's first impulse had been to go after him immediately. But Snape is, for the most part, safe in the castle, and Harry knew he needed time to process, trusted him to be alone for a little while. So he'd had some lunch, and forced himself to sit in his office for an hour, decidedly not marking papers.

"Are you all right?" he asks after a moment, sitting down on the end of the bed.

Snape doesn't respond.

"Have you eaten? I could Floo the kitchens."

"I'm not hungry."

"Okay," Harry says, not wanting to press. "How are you feeling?"

"How do you think I'm feeling?"

"I'm not sure. That's why I asked."

At this, Snape turns his head to look at Harry. His eyes are red, face blotchy. He's been crying. This realisation makes Harry's chest hurt.

"I'm cold," Snape says. "And I'm probably in shock."

"Yes," Harry says carefully. "Would you like the blankets? Some tea? Or I could call Poppy. Get you a draught?"

"No," Snape says. Then, after a few moments: "My dad died last year—" He frowns. "My dad died when I was sixteen. But my mum..." his voice cracks and he swallows thickly. "But my mum, she was—do you think she's still alive?"

Oh.

Harry hates himself for not thinking beyond the immediate, practical ramifications of Snape's appearance here. But over night, the boy has lost everything. Family, friends...everything.

"I'm not sure," Harry says. And he's not. Aside from a few snapshots—stolen images from a Pensieve, flashes from Occlumency—Harry knows very little about Snape's personal life. Snape was always an exceptionally private person. And, after the war, even while Harry worked tirelessly to clear Snape's name, he never thought to ask about his family, about next of kin.

He knows Snape was an only child. But his parents? Minerva never mentioned anything. Nor had Kingsley. Would they have known?

"She would still be alive," Snape says. "She was young. She's... she was only 43. That means..."

"Where did she live?" Harry asks. "Would you like to go? I'll take you. Or, we could send a Patronus?"

Snape sits up. "You'd do that?" Harry hears the scepticism clear in his voice. "You would take me

to her?"

"Yes."

"Isn't that unwise?"

"Maybe." Harry knows it is. But he doesn't care. Not now. It would be cruel to prevent Snape from finding out if his mother is still alive. If he's not...alone here in this wrong time.

"What if I find something out? Something I shouldn't know...for when I go back?"

"Do you want to see if we can find your mum? If you do, I'll take you."

Snape looks at him for a long moment. Then nods. "Yes."

They walk across the grounds to the edge of the castle wards. Then Snape takes Harry's arm and they Disapparate.

They land on a deserted street. Across the road stands row upon row of dilapidated brick houses, their windows dull and caked with grime. Many are clearly abandoned.

The entire place has an air of neglect, and Harry wonders if this is where Snape grew up. If this is where he met his mother for the first time.

In the distance, Harry can see the chimney of an old mill, casting a long shadow over the slanted rooftops. He hears the rush of water from the river nearby, smells the stink of refuse and fish.

"This way," Snape says, setting off down the street. Harry follows.

They turn down a narrow alley before emerging onto another seemingly identical street.

Spinners End.

They walk along the row of rundown terraced houses until the very end. Then Snape stops.

The windows of the home are boarded up. From the looks of it, no one has lived here in a very long time.

He hears Snape take a deep breath, sees him close his eyes. The boy is shaking. But then, he looks up again, and he's got his wand in his hand. Harry listens as he mutters spell after spell. Even at seventeen, he has a litany of magic at his disposal. And he is strong.

Harry knows he's listening, searching for magic. Because, after all, the house's appearance could just be a facade. Magicked to look this way on the outside to conceal someone living inside.

But Harry can tell this isn't the case. He knows without drawing his wand, without casting a spell, that there's nothing here.

"Maybe she's moved," he says, hopeful, when Snape lowers his wand again. The boy stares down at his shoes, shoulders slumped.

"No. She wouldn't."

Snape turns away without another word and begins walking down the street back the way they came. Harry follows behind him, walking quickly to keep pace with his longer strides.

Soon, they emerge from the grid of brick houses to a bit of open space, banked on one side by the foul little river.

The ground slopes up towards a small church. Compared to the rest of the town, it appears relatively well maintained. The yard is kept, the windows clean, shutters unbroken. There's a small graveyard around the back, and Harry follows Snape through the low gate.

It's quiet here, as they walk through the narrow rows of headstones. Snape knows the way and soon finds what he's looking for.

Snape's mother's grave lies beside his father's. Their stone markers are unadorned, bookends in their simplicity. Tobias Snape's is weathered now, the carved letters blackened with age. The marble of his mother's gravestone, while beginning to show signs of wear, is still a sky-coloured grey.

Eileen Prince Snape. Loving wife and mother. 1934-1996

Christ, 1996.

Snape lost his mum right when everything else was starting to fall apart. Harry feels an intense pang of regret, of sadness for the Snape he once knew. For the Snape he thought he hated. He wonders if Dumbledore had already found Gaunt's ring. If he'd already made Snape vow to murder him when Eileen Prince Snape had died. And Harry wonders if anyone mourned her death with her son, if anyone consoled Snape after his loss.

"She was only sixty-two," Snape says softly.

"I'm sorry." He doesn't know what else to say. But he places his hand on Snape's back, palm resting just between his shoulder blades. The boy stiffens, but does not pull away.

"She's been gone eleven years and I didn't know. I didn't get to bury her." Snape's head is down, his voice choked, and when he looks up again, Harry sees the wetness in his eyes. "I didn't even get to say goodbye." He feels Snape's chest rise and fall as he sucks in a ragged breath, and knows he is trying not to cry.

"I'm sorry."

Harry's not sure how long they stand there, but the sun has slid low in the summer sky when Snape finally turns from his parents' graves.

He takes a deep breath. Wipes a hand at his face, his eyes. "All right," he says. "Let's go."

Harry takes his arm and Apparates them to Muggle London. There's a pub not far from the Ministry where he and Ron would go for a pint after work back when they were in Auror training together. The fish and chips are decent and Harry could really go for a drink. Snape should eat, too. Harry's not sure the last time he did.

"Where are we?" Snape asks, looking around. Harry can sense his wariness, and he understands. Snape was always a paranoid bastard. Not that Harry blames him, mind. An occupational hazard of twenty years playing the spy, and one of the reasons he survived as long as he did. Besides, it's not as though Harry hasn't spent his life looking over his shoulder.

"London," Harry says. "I thought we should eat."

The pub is busy for a Sunday, but they find a booth and Harry slides in across from Snape, red

leather creaking beneath him as he sits.

After a few minutes, the waiter stops by their table. He's fit. A year or so younger than Harry and dressed in tight, dark jeans and a vintage Pink Floyd t-shirt. He smiles at Harry as he leans across their table, pointing out the day's specials. Any other night, Harry might hang around a bit, see if he wanted to grab a drink after his shift. If maybe he wanted to take Harry home. Instead he looks at Snape, asks what he'll eat.

The boy's got his head down, tracing lines along the worn tabletop with his finger. He doesn't look up, but he orders the shepherd's pie and a cup of coffee. Harry gets the fish and chips and asks for two ciders. He probably shouldn't be buying alcohol for a student, but Snape isn't *his* student and, from the looks of it, he needs the drink as much as Harry does.

"You don't think you'll be able to send me back, do you?" Snape says after the waiter's walked away. It's not really a question. Harry can hear the resignation in his voice; it settles like a stone in the pit of his stomach.

"I'm not sure," Harry answers finally.

The man returns with Snape's coffee, then heads back to the bar for their ciders.

Snape clasps his mug with both hands but does not drink. "I shouldn't be here. I'm supposed to be dead in this time and, wish magic or not, it's not—"

"You're not dead here," Harry says, cutting him off. "Nor should you be."

Snape sets his coffee down again, picks up the little creamer pot and turns it about in his hand. "Why are you doing this?"

"Doing what?"

"Being nice to me."

Harry frowns. Snape's expression gives nothing away. Finally, he says, "I am not my father. And, before—when I knew you—you helped me."

The waiter brings their drinks. Harry takes a long swig of his cider. It's crisp and tart and Harry has to resist the urge to drain the whole glass in one go.

Snape is quiet for a moment, but he's watching Harry. Then Harry feels the brush of his magic. He forces an Occlumency shield into place and shakes his head. "Don't."

Snape merely raises an eyebrow.

"When did you learn Legilimency?"

Snape shrugs. "I've always been good at mind magic." He tilts his head to one side. "Most people can't tell, you know."

"No," Harry agrees. "Most can't. But those who *can* are the ones you need to worry about. And they won't take kindly to you trying to read their thoughts. You need to be careful."

Snape takes a drink of his cider, traces a line down the side of the glass with his thumb. "That's it? Be careful? You're not going to tell me how Legilimency is dangerous? How, while not classified as Unforgiveable, it's not exactly considered proper magic?"

Harry shrugs. "It's a valuable skill. And you become very good at it."

Snape looks at him. Harry knows he wants to reach out again with his magic, to know what Harry knows, what Harry is thinking, but he doesn't.

Their food arrives. Harry pulls his fish apart with his fingers. It's almost too hot to touch. Grease splatters across the wax paper lining his plate.

Snape picks at his shepherd's pie, but at least he's eating. He's too thin by half, and Harry's not sure when he last had a proper meal.

"You're not going to tell me, are you? How we knew each other, how I helped you?" He tilts his head, looks at Harry. "You were my student?"

Harry douses his chips in vinegar. "Yes. But you know I can't tell you more. Not now."

"Not until you know if you can send me back."

"No."

They eat in silence for a while. Harry finishes his cider and signals the waiter for another. "You want one more?"

Snape shakes his head.

"I want to see my mum again," he says then. "And my friends." He glares at Harry, but his voice is sad. "I do have friends, you know."

"Yes."

Harry takes the last bite of his fish; his chest aches because he knows that the friends Snape had at seventeen are either dead or in Azkaban. He thinks of his own mother and how Snape—if they do find a way to send him back—will have to live through her death, will spend the rest of his life blaming himself. "Do you want to go back?" Harry asks. "Knowing what you do?"

"Knowing that I die, you mean?"

"Yes."

He looks at him for a long moment before saying, "Was it worth it? Was my life worth it?"

"Yes," Harry says. "It was."

That night, once they're back at Hogwarts and Snape is in his room and Harry is upstairs in his, he Firecalls Hermione. Ron's head appears in the flames. "Oi, mate, why don't you come through for a bit. 'Mione is putting Rose to bed."

Ron opens the connection and Harry steps through into their sitting room. The Camden flat is small but cosy. Ron's on the sofa watching some football match on the telly. "Grab yourself a beer," he says, holding his bottle up to Harry.

Harry walks into the adjoining kitchen and takes a Stella, popping the cap with a wave of his hand. He comes back to sit down beside Ron.

“So is it true?” Ron says. “You really wished Snape back from the dead?”

Harry runs a hand through his hair. “Not exactly.”

Ron laughs, shaking his head. “We always knew you were obsessed with the bastard, but—”

“Ron,” Hermione says, emerging from the hallway that leads back towards the bedrooms. “Don’t give Harry a hard time. He’s dealing with quite a lot right now.”

“Hermione’s just surprised you went with teenaged Snape,” Ron says with a grin. “But she forgot you spent half of sixth year wanting to shag the Half-Blood Prince.”

Harry groans.

“Ron!” Hermione says again, wedging herself between them on the sofa.

“That’s not true,” Harry says, taking a swig of beer. At Ron’s look, he grimaces. “Well, maybe a little. But, in my defence, I didn’t know the Prince was Snape.”

“Still wanted to shag him.”

Hermione sighs. “You were a bit too attached to that book, Harry.”

“Doesn’t mean I wished Snape back so I could sleep with him. And it’s not as though I did it intentionally, anyhow.”

Ron just looks at him.

“*Jesus Christ*. You’re supposed to agree with me!” Harry says. “Maybe I wished him back because he was a hero who didn’t deserve to die the way he did. Maybe I wished him back because I still feel bloody guilty I couldn’t save him. Maybe I wished him back because there is so much I could have done differently...”

Hermione puts a hand on his arm. “Harry,” she says gently. “It’s all right. We know.”

He nods. “Maybe we can focus less on why my subconscious decided to magic Snape back into existence and more on what we should do about it?”

Ron laughs too loudly. “Okay. But you have to admit, if it weren’t so alarming, it’d be pretty funny. And wicked cool magic, too.”

“Terrifying magic,” Hermione corrects.

Harry wants to bury his face in his hands. Instead he takes another swig of his beer.

“How’s he doing?” Hermione asks.

“I’m not sure,” Harry says honestly, glad for the change in subject. “His mum’s dead. She died in 1996.”

Hermione frowns.

He shrugs. “I took him to his old house.”

“Poor kid,” Ron says. Then, “Whoa, I can’t believe I just said that about Snape.”

“You shouldn’t have done that,” Hermione says.

“I know. But it seemed wrong not to. I mean, he’s likely still in shock. He was ripped away from his life without warning or explanation, only to find that, in his correct timeline, he dies before he turns forty. We have no idea if we can send him back. And he wanted to know if his mum was still alive. What was I supposed to do?”

“Not take him.” But then she puts her arm around Harry’s shoulders, squeezes him gently. “But that doesn’t mean you didn’t do the right thing, Harry.”

They sit in silence for a while. Liverpool scores a goal and Ron shakes his head. “Really thought Arsenal had a chance this year.”

“Season’s still early,” Harry says and Ron grunts. He takes his wand from his pocket and three more beers fly in from the kitchen.

He hands one to Harry before opening Hermione’s for her.

“Thanks, love.” She takes a drink. “I went into the Ministry today.”

“And?” Harry says. He leans back, head resting against the sofa cushion.

“And we already know how complicated time travel is. More so here because of the magic involved and the sheer scale of the time frame. Even if we could, theoretically, find a way to send someone back thirty years in the past—if, say we managed to amplify the magical range of a Time-Turner, for example—I don’t think we should.”

Harry closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. He twists his beer bottle between his hands. It’s cool against his palms.

“So we don’t even try?” Ron says. “That’s it? He’s just stuck here?”

“There are too many unknowns. It’s highly probable that his time doesn’t exist anymore. And if we try to send him back to a timeline that no longer exists—”

“But you used a Time-Turner,” Ron insists. “Third year. You were fine. You certainly didn’t blink out of existence. The past existed when you sent yourself there.”

“I used a Time-Turner to go back mere hours, Ron. Not years. The time stream is still relatively fluid at that point. There’s a small window where multiple possibilities exist and the past can still be altered. Not to mention the fact that I was still very much alive in my time. And it was still dangerous, mind.”

“She’s right,” Harry says.

“What?” Ron asks.

“She’s right. I don’t think we can send him back.”

Hermione places a hand on Harry’s back. Her touch is tentative, gentle. “Have you thought, perhaps, that’s for the best?” Her voice is sad, but there’s sincerity there too, and Harry hates how that hurts because he *has* thought about that. And, despite how traumatic and difficult and positively jarring this must be for Snape, he can’t help but thrill at the thought of having him *alive* and well and with a second chance to *live*. To live free from Voldemort and free from Dumbledore and free from everything that forced him to spend two decades a spy and then die misunderstood

and hated and far too young in that filthy shack.

“Maybe this is your way of saving him after all,” Ron says. “I know it’s not how you meant it to happen, but Snape deserved to be saved. We all know that.”

Harry nods. He feels strung out, wrenched open, and more than a tad selfish. “And if he hates me?” Harry asks. “If he hates me for what I’ve done? For what I’ve taken away from him?”

“Then you’ll have to live with that.”

The following morning, Harry knocks on Snape’s door at nine. With Minerva’s approval, he’s cancelled his classes today. They both agree: Snape takes priority.

“Come in.” Harry feels the wards Snape cast fall away, and he pushes the door open.

Snape’s on his bed, a mug coffee floating by his head. He’s bare-chested, dressed only in a worn pair of sleep pants with what looks to be miniature Hippogriffs parading up and down them.

Harry can’t stop himself from looking, just a little. Snape is thin, but he has some muscle. His chest, his shoulders are wiry and strong, like Harry’s at that age, and his skin is pale, nearly white. Harry’s eyes sweep over brown nipples, the line of dark hair that disappears into the waistband of his pants. And his arm. Harry can’t help but look at his left arm.

He looks up again, finds Snape watching him.

“Is this what you’re looking at?” Snape asks, holding his arm up. He turns it from side to side. The skin there is bare—pale and unblemished. “I’m not Marked, if you were wondering. Though,” he tilts his head, “judging from your expression, I think I must take it.”

“Yes,” Harry says, “you do.”

“Seems strange, doesn’t it, that Dumbledore would pick a Death Eater for his successor?”

“You regretted it. You spent the rest of your life working to make up for that mistake.”

Snape snorts. “Lot of good it did me. Seeing as how I’m dead.”

“He’s gone,” Harry says. “Voldemort is dead. I killed him.”

Snape’s eyes widen. “You?”

“Yes. And I couldn’t have done it without your help.”

“You killed the Dark Lord? He says slowly, disbelief colouring his voice. Then he shakes his head. “Was there something you needed?”

“I, er...” Something occurs to Harry then. “Do you have clothes?”

“I wasn’t expecting company.”

“I know, but...” Harry stops. “I’m sorry, I should have realised. Of course you don’t.”

“Bellamy is washing my trousers and shirt,” Snape says. “He found...these,” he looks down at the ridiculous sleep pants, “abandoned in the laundry. I can’t imagine why.”

Harry laughs. He hates that this Snape reminds him so much of the Prince at times. But of course he does. “Bellamy?”

“House-elf. Quite ancient now, I’d say. He used to work in the Slytherin dorms. Now he’s apparently on ‘castle management,’ whatever that means. But he remembered me, when I called him. He’s been kind.”

“I’ll get you some clothes,” Harry says. “And school robes. Professor McGonagall would like you to recommence your studies while you’re...here.”

“I’m not stupid.”

“No...”

“Wish magic operates on intention and—despite the fact that you, apparently, managed to do such unthinkable magic without even realising you were doing so—your intention, I believe, was still to rectify a wrong.”

“Yes.”

“And there is no longer any way that wrong can be rectified if I return to my correct timeline.”

“No.” *Merlin*, Harry always knew Snape was intelligent, but at seventeen he’s more perceptive than most adult wizards he knows. He’s intuited the crux of the problem without anyone fully explaining it to him. Harry shouldn’t be surprised, but he is.

“I don’t have any books,” Snape says then. “Or supplies.”

“I’ll get you everything you need.”

They’re back in the Headmistress’s office. Snape sits quietly while Hermione and Harry explain what Snape already figured out. That—while they will continue to look for a solution—there is likely no way to send him back, not without grave risk, that is. Harry’s wish magic did the seemingly impossible, and the intention behind that magic—even if Harry wasn’t aware of it at the time—appears to preclude any possible means of returning him to his original timeline.

“Severus, dear, what courses are you enrolled in?” Minerva says then. “I’ll get your schedule sorted.”

Snape looks up now, blinking as though registering her for the first time. “My courses? Defence, Potions, Charms, Transfigurations, Arithmancy, Herbology, and Alchemy.”

Minerva frowns. “I’m afraid we’re not offering Alchemy this term. Not enough students. Though, we could arrange an independent study if you like.”

Snape shakes his head. “Care of Magical Creatures then.”

He must notice the startled looks because his eyes narrow. “What? I got my O.W.L. I’m certain my results are still on file in the Department of Records, even if it is,” he pauses, takes a deep breath, “2007.”

“No, no,” Minerva says. “That’s not it at all.”

“I like animals, you know,” Snape says then, defiance clear in his voice.

Harry tries to hide his smile.

“We will get you situated in the dorms,” Minerva continues, “enrol you as a transfer student. You can return to classes as soon as you’re ready.”

“All right,” Snape says, “but I don’t have any money. I was on scholarship...before.”

“Don’t worry about that,” Minerva assures. “Though, I’m not sure it’s wise to go to the board for scholarship approval...”

“No,” Harry says. “We can’t draw attention. The fewer people who know, who have the chance to suspect anything, the better.”

“There is some money, though,” Minerva says then, hesitating as though unsure whether she should say more. At Harry’s nod, she continues. “When your future self died, he left a small sum to Hogwarts. It isn’t much. And it will take some manoeuvring to get it back to you without revealing that you are here. But as trustee, I can do so, and it’s enough to cover your graduate studies and necessary expenses.”

“Graduate studies...” Snape says slowly, as though rolling the words about in his mouth, testing the way they feel on his tongue.

“You are planning to pursue your mastery, aren’t you?” Hermione asks, and Snape nods.

“I’ve already started my applications. But...” He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath. “If I can’t go back, I’ll have to...” He looks up, dark eyes wide. Harry can practically feel his anxiety. “I’m not even sure how that will work. I have no identification, no transcripts, no—”

“It will be fine,” Filius says. “We are rather good at magic here. And we have your original records. We can assure that you have everything you need.”

Snape nods. Then, after a moment, he says: “I left my money to Hogwarts?”

“Yes,” Minerva says. “And some books, as well as a few small family heirlooms—I have those. As for the books, the few that were suitable for the general student population are now in the library. The others, I fear, were not even appropriate for the Restricted Section. I will return those to you when you have properly finished school, and not a moment sooner.”

Snape is frowning, eyes fixed ahead, though he doesn’t seem to be looking at anyone. “And I left everything to Hogwarts because I had no family and I was Headmaster...”

“Yes,” Harry says, gently. Snape already knows about his mother, after all. “You never married.”

Snape huffs at that, a sharp burst of self-deprecating sound. “No, I wouldn’t have done, now, would I?”

Harry isn’t sure how to respond to that, so he says nothing.

“There are a few more teachers we will have to tell,” Minerva says then. “Those who taught Severus before.”

“Aurora should know as well,” Filius adds. “She and Severus were close, and she’ll be his Head of House.”

“I can go by Prince,” Snape says then, pressing his lips together, considering. “Severus Prince. If it

would help, that is.”

Severus returns to classes in two days.

Harry has seventh year Ravenclaws and Slytherins after lunch. He’s admittedly nervous, though he’s not sure if it’s more for Snape or for himself.

Snape is incredibly intelligent and Harry knows he was a strong student, but this experience must be beyond disorienting for him.

And Harry... Harry is still trying to sort everything out in his own head. He knows this must be strange for professors like Filius who taught Snape as a boy, who then became his colleagues and friends later in life.

But Snape *taught* Harry and, Merlin knows, they never got along spectacularly well in the classroom. He can’t help but stress about how it will be now that their roles are reversed.

His seventh years are working on wordless casting. A few students are already adept at the skill. Others will likely never master it. But offensive magic is every bit as important as defensive magic and Harry knows you can’t be a strong dueller without the ability to cast wordlessly. It’s also vital for myriad other professions where you must be able to work magic simultaneously—Medi wizards, and craftsmen, curse breakers, and potions makers, just to name a few.

Harry knows the adult Snape was highly proficient at both wordless and wandless casting. And, based on the detection spells Harry witnessed him perform at his childhood house and then, later, the Legilimency he attempted on Harry at the pub, Harry knows this Snape is already capable of some wordless casting, if not wandless as well. Still, he takes an empty seat towards the front of the room and listens attentively—elbow propped on the desktop, cheek resting on his palm as Harry reviews the basic premises of nonverbal spellwork. Then he takes out a quill and some parchment and dutifully takes notes when Harry distributes the article from Archibald Fondren’s *Advanced Magical Casting* he’s copied for them to read.

As Harry watches Snape for a moment—bent forward over his paper, head bowed as he works—he is reminded of a scene from the Pensieve years before. But here, in his new school robes and with freshly washed hair, he looks nothing like the boy his father and Sirius bullied a lifetime (and days) ago.

Snivellus, they called him Snivellus...

Apollo Anderson, the Slytherin seated beside Snape, leans over and taps him on the shoulder. Snape turns, listening to whatever Anderson has to say. Then he whispers something in return and points to section of the text. The boy nods, thanking Snape, and returns to his own work.

Snape has only just moved into the dorms. He hasn’t had time to make friends—if he even wants to do so. But he appears to be fitting in fine, considering.

As far as Harry knows, there have been no signs of mistreatment, of rudeness, or worse from current students. Transfer students at Hogwarts—especially sixth and seventh years—while not unheard of, are still a bit of a novelty and usually treated with interest and acceptance.

That Severus Prince was purportedly home-schooled until only recently when his mother died, has created an air of mystery around him, and Harry has noticed a few girls and boys looking at him, not with distrust or disdain, but with curiosity and kindness.

Harry can't help but think, again, that this might be *good* for him. No one knows his past. There is no one to judge him for his poverty, for his working-class upbringing, or for his Muggle father who hated magic and worked in the town mill until the day he died.

And there is no one to judge him for or, conversely, to be drawn to his "fascination" with the Dark Arts. There is, after all, no gang of burgeoning young Death Eaters here for Snape to fall into ranks with. No one to indulge the insecurities, the ambition, and the prejudices Harry knows this young Snape must have. After all, this Snape was well on his way to being Marked, when Harry's magic pulled him from his time.

They are still working their way through Fondren when Snape raises his hand. His robes are open in deference to the heat, and his tie is loosed; he's got his dark hair pulled back into a knot. It serves to emphasise the sharp angles of his face, his nose. But rather than it looking harsh, Harry finds it rather striking. He blinks, forcing that thought aside.

"Yes, Mr. Prince?"

"I was wondering, sir, if we'd be moving on to Cudyer, next? In my...previous studies, I found his text particularly helpful in understanding nonverbal casting, but, perhaps it's considered outdated now?" He frowns before adding pointedly: "I didn't always have the most modern materials."

Harry smiles. "I like Cudyer. He's still studied at the mastery level. But I think he might be a tad dogmatic for our purposes. Rather, I thought we'd do Douglass. His "Treatise on Wordless Wizardry," in addition to the sections in our textbook on nonverbal magic, should provide a more than adequate foundation.

Snape tilts his head to one side. "I've never heard of Douglass."

Harry cannot say: *'Of course not. Lysander Douglass only began publishing a few years ago.* So instead, he says, "Good. Perhaps you'll find him interesting then."

And Snape nods. His eyes are very dark.

"Are you interested in magic theory?" He asks Snape, genuinely curious. So many of his students only care about practical casting and demonstration. He understands. He used to find bookwork tedious as well, and he knows the importance of teaching his students how to duel and how to defend themselves. But he also knows how necessary theory is. It was only after he understood how and why magic acts the way it does, that Harry could begin to truly make his magic do what he wanted. Leave it to Snape to be the first student he's taught to realise its value.

"Obviously," Snape answers, with a scowl.

A few nights later, Harry is patrolling the halls when he sees a faint Lumos up ahead. He makes sure his steps are louder than necessary as he approaches, so whoever is there knows he's coming.

"It's all right," he hears. "I'm alone." Snape pokes his head out from the alcove where he's sitting. "And suits of armour don't do it for me so..."

Harry laughs. "So you're decent."

"Yeah."

Harry sits down on the opposite side of the niche, the armour standing tall between them. The space is small, crowded, and he tucks his legs beneath him. Snape's got his knees pulled up to his chest. Even so, they are nearly touching.

"So," Snape says, "how often do you find students in, er, compromising situations?"

Harry laughs. "Far more often than I'd like—and I'm not exactly, stealthy, you know, when I do rounds."

Snape snorts. "Then perhaps you shouldn't do so many rounds."

"If only your former self could hear you now."

"Yeah?"

"I'm not certain, but I think finding students out after curfew was one of his greatest pleasures."

"And how often did I take points from your precious Gryffindors, then?" Snape asks with a smirk.

"That's probably information I shouldn't tell you, yeah?"

Snape kicks at Harry's knee with the toe of his trainer.

"So, how are you?" Harry asks then.

"Fine."

"Are you?"

Snape shrugs. "Aren't you going to take points? It's after curfew, after all."

"Not tonight." Harry takes the book from Snape's lap. *Advanced Potions for the Modern Wizard*. He flips through its pages.

When O'Connor took the Potions position two years prior, she'd requested a new text for sixth and seventh years. Harry understood. After all, potions, like all sciences and natural studies, are constantly changing and developing. The Half-Blood-Prince's knowledge aside, Harry's potions abilities still left a lot to be desired and even he couldn't imagine keeping the same textbook for decades. Surely there'd been advancements in the past half-century to warrant an updated potions text.

"I'm in there," Snape says quietly, and Harry stops turning the pages. He looks up at Snape.

"Pardon?"

"I'm in there," he says again. "My name. Severus Snape. There are at least a dozen references. You can check the appendices."

Harry does. And there, yes, '*Snape, Severus*' is listed with multiple page numbers behind.

"I invented four new potions, and I made improvements to nine existing ones," Snape says. He sounds almost stunned.

"Likely more than that, if I had to guess," Harry says.

Snape only looks at him.

“You were the premier Potions Master in all of England.” He shakes his head. “I sucked at Potions and even I realised that. And I think you liked to research.”

“I do...” Snape takes the book back from Harry, holding it almost reverently. He flips to a particular page, smooths his finger across the words. “It says I improved the Wolfsbane potion.”

“You did.”

Snape nods. “I was working on that. I’d hoped...” he pauses, takes a breath, and then continues. “I’d hoped my preliminary research would be enough to get me a scholarship to my mastery programme.” He looks down, reading. “I knew the aconite was the key.”

“You were brilliant,” Harry says, and he means it.

Snape frowns. “But what am I supposed to do now? Everything I wanted to research... All the ideas I had... They’re done.”

“I guess you’ll just have to think of something new.”

The following class period, Harry pairs up students to practise nonverbal casting in duelling situations. He’d be lying if he said he hadn’t spent the majority of the previous evening deliberating over whom to put with Snape.

He’s settled on Edmond Fitzpatrick who is, by far, the best Defence student in this class section and one of the strongest in the year.

Fitzpatrick looks at Harry, one eyebrow raised, as he takes his place across from Snape. Harry understands. He usually works with Fitzpatrick himself, or puts him with Mary McDonald, the second best dueller in the group. It seems inappropriate to pair him with a transfer student whose abilities are untested.

But Harry only nods, as students take their places. He’s almost certain Snape can hold his own against Fitzpatrick or, well, anyone.

Snape’s magic is strong. Harry can sense that clearly. His grasp of theory is better than even Harry’s was at that age. And Harry knows he’s been writing spells and inventing magic since at least sixth year.

“All right,” Harry says, once everyone is in position. “Let’s stick to minor offensive spells sets. Stunners, cutting hexes, immobilisers, and the like. And remember that our focus is on wordless magic. See if you can use nonverbal casting to layer your spellwork more effectively or to maintain your shield while you cast offensively.”

Harry gives the signal to begin and walks around the perimeter of the room watching and providing feedback as needed. It’s clear that most of his students still do not understand the principles behind wordless casting or, if they do, they do not have the precision or power to use nonverbal magic.

“Mr. Bulstrode, Ms. Nguyen, wordless casting is not the same thing as whispering. You cannot merely say your spells under your breath and pretend it’s nonverbal. The premise isn’t the same. You know this.” Alison Nguyen scowls at being called out, but both students nod dutifully. “Focus on the wand movement,” Harry says. “On the thought behind your intended magic. That’s how you must channel your spell. Not through the word as we do with traditional casting.” He draws his wand in a quick arc, and Matty Bulstrode’s arms are pinned to his side. Another twist of his wrist,

and the boy's wand flies into Harry's outstretched hand. "Here," Harry says, releasing the spell and handing his wand back. "Keep trying. You'll get it."

"We weren't the only ones whispering," Nguyen mutters as Harry walks away. "Just look at Lily Pinkerton."

"I know," Bulstrode agrees. "But that doesn't mean he's wrong. Come on. We've got time to go again."

Harry tries not to smile as he moves on to the next pair. She's right, after all. He sees far more whispered and silently mouthed spells than actual nonverbal casting. Clearly they need more practice.

Harry's been watching Snape and Fitzpatrick discreetly this entire time. Now he leans back against the wall to openly observe the rest of their duel. While Fitzpatrick is too smart to let his guard down or to underestimate an opponent, it is clear he wasn't expecting much of a challenge. But then Snape had deflected his first stinging hex with a wave of his hand and Fitzpatrick gasped at the casual use of wordless, wandless magic.

He'd recovered quickly, though. And Harry watches as he layers a freezing hex with a particularly skilful nonverbal stunner. Snape has to funnel more magic into his shield, giving Fitzpatrick time to time to cast an *Incarcerous*, but he misses wide right, and Snape counters with his own *Immobulus* that he's layered with a wordless dampening spell.

It's effective. Fitzpatrick doesn't realise his shield has been weakened until it's too late. He's knocked back several steps by the force of Snape's spell. He doesn't lose his footing, though, and is able to recast his shield in time to absorb Snape's *Diffindo*. But Snape's casting again and, this time, Fitzpatrick can't block him.

The spell hits Fitzpatrick square in the chest. "Holy shit," he says, bringing his hands up to his face.

Snape disarms him neatly and stands down, both wands at his side.

"What the hell was that?" Fitzpatrick sounds panicked, and he's still rubbing at his eyes.

Harry steps forward in front of Snape. "What did you cast?" he asks.

"*Tenebraeus*."

Harry frowns, drawing his wand to cast a detection spell. "Blindness..." He unravels the spellwork with a murmured incantation, and Fitzpatrick blinks, opens his eyes again.

"Are you all right?" Harry asks.

"I think so." He's staring at Snape, but he doesn't look scared or angry. He looks impressed. "That was brilliant, mate," he says as Snape hands him back his wand.

"Your own magic, Mr. Prince?" Harry asks, and he nods.

"Yes, sir." Snape bites his lip. Then, "How did you break it, without the counter-curse?"

"I didn't need one." Harry looks around. The rest of the class is watching them closely. "All right, all right," he says, waving his hand. "That's enough. You may go." He turns back to Snape and Fitzpatrick. "Do you need the hospital wing, Edmond?"

“No, sir” the boy says. “I’m fine.”

“Okay, if you’re certain.”

Both boys move to collect their things, but Harry stops Snape before he can head to the door. “Mr. Prince, just a moment please.”

Fitzpatrick pauses, looking back.

“He’s not in trouble,” Harry assures, and the boy shrugs, turning to go. “You did well today, Mr. Fitzpatrick,” he says. “That freezing charm, in particular, was well cast.”

“Thank you, sir,” Fitzpatrick says, pulling the door shut behind him.

Harry turns to Snape. The boy’s leaning back against a desk, feigning uninterest, but his spine is too straight, his shoulders too stiff, and Harry knows he’s nervous. “You are good at duelling,” he says. It’s not a question, and Snape does not answer. “How long have you been writing your own spells?”

“Since I was thirteen.”

This surprises Harry. “Impressive.”

The boy looks at him steadily, but his eyes give nothing away.

“And do you test your spells, before you cast them?”

At this, Snape rolls his eyes. “Of course I do.”

“How?”

“On myself, mostly.”

Harry raises an eyebrow, thinking of *Sectumsempra*. ‘*For enemies...*’

“Or on practice dummies.”

“Okay.” Harry crosses his arms, looks at Snape, but the boy doesn’t flinch, doesn’t react to the scrutiny at all. He just stands there perfectly still, dark eyes fixed on Harry’s.

“I need you to promise me, Mr. Prince,” he says after a long moment, “that you will never cast any potentially lethal spells on your fellow classmates—even if you know the counter curse.”

“That spell wasn’t lethal. It wasn’t even dark.”

“I know and, given the situation, it was a good choice. Creative, unexpected, and effective. But I don’t think that’s all the magic you’ve invented.”

Snape looks down. “No, sir.”

“Right then.” He pauses, then adds, “It’s probably for the best, actually, if you stick to spells with known counter curses.”

“You didn’t need the counter curse, though,” Snape says, and though his voice is petulant, Harry hears some admiration there too.

“No. But that doesn’t mean it’s a good idea to cast spells in a class setting that only you can break.”

Snape doesn’t look as if he agrees, but he nods. “How were you able to do it, though? Release Fitzpatrick from my *Tenebraeus*? You haven’t heard that spell before, have you?”

“No.” Harry laughs. “That’s entirely original. And dead useful too.”

Snape glares, not distracted by the compliment. “Then how did you undo it without my spell?”

“I didn’t need it,” Harry says simply. “Once I had a read on your magic, I could unravel it.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I’ve never been able to write magic,” Harry says in explanation. “But that doesn’t mean I can’t make it do what I want.”

“You don’t even need your wand, do you?”

Harry looks at him for a moment but answers truthfully. “No. Not usually.”

Snape nods. If this surprises him, he doesn’t let on. “I thought so.” He shakes his head. “Most of your students have no idea, do they? How strong you are?”

Harry shrugs. “They know I’m powerful. That I was an Auror and a soldier. And that I know my way around the Defence curriculum, which is what really matters, in the end.”

“Right...” Snape doesn’t look convinced. “But why use your wand at all, if you don’t need it?”

“That’s not really the type of thing you want everyone and their best mate to know, now, is it?”

Snape presses his lips together, considering. “I guess not.”

“If I’ve learned anything at all over the last ten years,” Harry says, “it’s that it’s best not to advertise your power. In the real world, it will likely just put a target on your back. And here, well, I wouldn’t be a very good Defence teacher if I didn’t model correct casting, now would I?”

“No.”

“Most wizards go their whole lives without being able to cast intentional wandless magic,” Harry says. “Not everyone understands it, and that type of magic can make others uncomfortable, jealous, or even fearful. It’s best to be discreet.”

Harry intends to spend the weekend researching. But Saturday morning is beautiful. It’s sunny and clear with just a hint of chill in the air, and besides, it feels as though he’s been in the library more these past few weeks than he was the whole of his mastery programme.

He’s not giving up.

But he knows that, with each passing day, it become less and less likely they will be able to safely return young Snape to his appropriate timeline—if that was even a possibility to begin with.

He considers flying, but Hufflepuff has reserved the pitch for a morning practice, and he feels like a run anyhow. So he takes the main door from the castle and jogs across the grounds to the path to Hogsmeade. If he runs down to the village and then cuts back up along the edge of the Forbidden

Forest, it's nearly three miles start to finish, and just enough to make his muscles ache.

Harry listens to the sound of his trainers thudding against the ground as he reaches the edge of the castle's wards. The magic slips over his skin when he crosses the invisible barrier and he speeds up, breath already ragged as he heads down the gently sloping path away from Hogwarts. Harry likes to run, and he tries to get out a few times a week. It's a habit left over from his days in the Auror programme when he'd run every morning before training.

Ron used to give him shit about it—why waste the hour of sleep when they were going to be worked over in the training centre later? But that was just it. Harry had worked too hard to get to that point. He wanted it too much, and he couldn't afford to let up, to be in anything less than peak physical form.

Harry never liked the sideways glances, the resentful murmurs around the commissary, the bullpen. The hushed insinuations that he wasn't deserving. That he was only there because he was Harry Potter. Never mind the fact that he'd actually lived up to his fucking name and killed Voldemort, ended the war when no one else could.

But he kept his head down, worked hard, and, when he finally made it through the training programme, Harry could say for sure that it was entirely on his own merit.

His lungs are burning by the time he reaches the outskirts of the village. He passes two witches, arms laden with packages, and runs faster, sidestepping a puddle and cutting back across the dirt path towards the trail leading around the Forbidden Forest.

His hair falls forward into his eyes, and he brushes it away. For so long he'd wanted to be an Auror, but it only took six months for him to realise that it wasn't for him. That was all right, though, because, when he left the Force to pursue his Defence Mastery, it was on his own terms, and he couldn't be happier.

His calves ache, but he doesn't slow down, not until he emerges from the tree line where the forest meets the shore of the lake.

Harry is already thinking of a hot shower and then heading down to the kitchens to grab a breakfast wrap with sausage when he sees Snape. The boy is by the water's edge, lying on the sand. His robes are off, his shirtsleeves rolled to the elbow, one arm thrown across his face blocking the sun.

"Hey," Harry says, sitting down beside him. The ground is cool and damp.

Snape startles, opening his eyes, but he does not move to sit up. "Professor Potter," he says, taking in Harry's sweaty Gryffindor Quidditch t-shirt, joggers, and dirty trainers. He raises an eyebrow. Somehow he manages to look both superior and entirely uninterested all at once. Impressive while sprawled on his back on the ground. Harry nearly laughs at how Snape-like the expression is.

"What are you doing?" he asks.

"Pretty day. Went for a run."

"What on earth for?"

Harry laughs. "Didn't feel like flying."

"Figured you played Quidditch," Snape says, eyeing his t-shirt with clear distaste.

"I did." Harry grins. "Seeker."

“Of course.” He purses his lips, looks Harry over once more. “You’ve got the build for it, anyhow.”

Harry shrugs. “Do you like flying?”

“No.” He frowns. “Well, I guess I do like flying some, but I don’t like brooms.”

“There’s a way to fly without a broom, you know,” Harry says, remembering the old Snape.

“How?”

“Merlin if I know,” Harry says. “But I’ve definitely heard of wizards that can. Maybe you can figure it out.”

“Maybe.” Snape doesn’t say anything else. He just closes his eyes again. Harry looks around. It’s early yet, but there are a few students out. A group of Ravenclaws have a blanket spread out on the grass. They’ve got a basket of pastries from the kitchens and a stack of textbooks between them. And there’s a sixth year couple sitting about thirty metres down the shoreline; their heads are bowed together, paper cups of coffee clutched in their hands.

Snape’s brought his bag out. A library text is discarded off to the side.

“I like McGregor,” Harry says, glancing at the cover. “Good reference.”

Snape scowls. “Useless, though. There’s absolutely nothing in there about travelling more than two weeks back in time.”

Harry sighs. “That seems to be the magic number, doesn’t it?”

Two weeks.

As Hermione explained, that’s how long the time stream remains fluid. Beyond that, the past is, well, past.

“I mean,” Snape continues, “I get that you’re not *supposed* to do it. And I get *why* you’re not supposed to do it. But I still can’t believe that there’s no way to *actually* do it. He looks up at Harry and narrows his eyes. “With apparent exception of completely unprecedented magic by stupidly powerful wizards like yourself, that is.”

Harry looks away with a grimace. “I’m sorry.”

Snape ignores this. “And you can’t just reverse the magic and wish me back because evidently your deepest fucking desire was to save my life. The whole goddamned world at your disposal and that’s what you go with?” He shakes his head. “Bloody awful choice, if you ask me.”

Harry picks at his thumbnail and does not look at Snape. He’s not sure what to say. “I didn’t mean —”

“Yes,” Snape says, cutting him off. “You did. But you’re so bloody powerful that you didn’t even have to know you meant to do it.” He picks up a twig, snaps it in half. “I’d be impressed, you know, if it weren’t my fucking life.” He pulls himself up to a sitting position, wraps his arms around his knees.

Harry wants to reach out, to touch him. But he knows he shouldn’t, so he digs his fingers into the sand, feels the cool grit beneath his fingernails, listens to the sound of the water lap against the

shore.

Snape's got a notebook beside him. Harry picks it up without thinking. Opens it.

Snape stiffens, goes to stop him, but it's too late. There's a stack of drawings inside. Charcoal sketches on thick parchment. The first is of a dark haired boy about Snape's age.

Harry looks at it for a moment. "I know him..." he says. "Did you draw this?"

Snape shrugs. "I like to draw." He pauses, looks down at his lap. "It helps me remember things."

"Who is this?" Harry asks. The boy in the drawing is familiar. He's handsome, chin raised in a haughty way. Harry runs his finger over the lines of his face, his dark hair, his slight features.

"Just a friend," Snape says under his breath.

"Regulus..." Harry looks at Snape. "You're friends with Regulus Black?"

Snape's looking at him now. "Yes. Do you know him? Is he—"

Harry's heart sinks. "No. I... He was my godfather's brother. But he's not... I never knew him."

"He's dead then." The words are spoken simply, matter-of-fact.

"Yes."

The boy takes a deep breath, tugs his knees tighter to his chest. "When did he die? Will you tell me?"

"He was seventeen. Sirius told me it was a motorcycle accident. But it wasn't."

Snape nods. "Seventeen... That's barely a year from now." He looks up, staring at some distant point across the lake. "We were going to take the Mark together."

"I know."

"Regulus wanted to please his parents so badly but..." Snape breaks off, rubs at his eyes with his hand.

"He regretted it," Harry says. "Just like you did. And he died fighting Voldemort."

"Of course he did," Snape laughs, a bitter, harsh sound. "Idealistic fucking bastard."

This time, Harry does reach out, places a hand on the small of Snape's back. The boy does not pull away.

"I don't want to die," Snape says, pressing his fingers to his temples. "You took me from my life. It might not have been a great life, but it was mine. But I'm not stupid. And I don't want to die." He leans forward; a strand of dark hair falls into his eyes.

"I know," Harry says. "And I meant to save you. Years ago. During the war. I tried. But I couldn't, so—"

"So this was the only way."

They're quiet for a while. Snape has not moved to take the notebook away from Harry, so he pulls

out the next drawing. Then he inhales sharply.

Snape looks at him sideways. "Serves you right, you know. Prying into someone else's things."

The drawing is...explicit.

"I, er...I... that's..." Harry struggles to find the words. His cheeks are warm. There are two boys pictured, and they're in bed. One's lying between the other's legs, head bent down, lips stretched around his prick. The other boy's mouth is open in obvious pleasure; his hands are twisted in his partner's dark hair. "That's..."

"Disgusting?" Snape supplies, voice flat, he's staring straight ahead.

"I was going to say hot. But, er, also inappropriate, of course."

"Of course." Snape doesn't say anything else, but he's turned his head, is watching Harry curiously.

Harry runs a hand through his hair. He really should go back in the castle. Take his shower. "So, er, do you have anything else?" he asks instead.

Snape laughs. "Anything else pornographic and therefore not at all what I should be showing my *professor* or anything else that doesn't involve men fucking each other.

Harry swallows. His throat is dry. "The latter."

"Right." Snape takes his notebook from Harry, turns the pages gingerly. "Here," he says, holding out another drawing.

Harry takes it and his breath catches. She's younger than he remembers. Sixteen, maybe seventeen. But it's her. *Of course it's her*. She's beautiful, and Harry can feel the affection, the tenderness here in the way Snape has drawn her. Lily's eyes are soft and wide, her mouth slightly parted, her hair loose and falling over her shoulders.

"Your mum, right?" Snape says softly, and Harry nods.

"I knew it." He shakes his head, but his expression is not unkind. "Of course Potter married her. *Bastard*," he adds under his breath. He turns to Harry. "You look so much like him, but I see Lily in you too." He goes to touch Harry's face, but stops, pulls his hand back again.

"He's an arsehole, but he loves her. I'll give him that."

"Yes," Harry says, still staring at the picture. "He did."

"Did?" Snape frowns. "Potter's dead, too, then."

"And my mum. They died when I was just a baby. I never really knew them."

"Christ," Snape says, running a pale hand through his hair. It leaves it mussed and out of place. He looks so young. It's odd, and once again Harry must work to disassociate this Snape from the one he used to know. The boy leans forward, hands dropping between his knees. His expression is thoughtful, sad, and it softens his features markedly. "Everyone I cared for is dead here."

"I'm sorry," Harry says, not knowing what else to say, but he means it desperately. Then, thinking of the drawing of the two boys in bed, he asks: "Were you and Regulus...together?"

Snape shrugs and, for a moment, Harry does not think he's going to answer, but then he says: "No, I don't think so. Not really. We kissed a few times and..." He frowns. "I thought that...maybe. But no."

More students are outside now enjoying the day. Linus Macmillan's brought a football and a group of Hufflepuffs and Gryffindors have set up a match, goals lines magicked in the air in an iridescent blue. Several girls look on, cheering and laughing as the boys try to impress them. Harry looks back to the water.

"So you like men too, then," Snape says finally, breaking the silence.

"Yes."

"Good."

It's nearly curfew when he finds Snape in the library. Harry's just stopped in to pick up a new text for a lesson he's planning with his fourth and fifth years, and he sees him alone at a table in the back corner. He's sitting cross-legged, socked feet tucked beneath him on the chair, and he's staring straight ahead at the shelves before him.

"Hey," Harry says, coming up beside him. "Mr. Prince, are you all right?" But then he sees what the boy's got spread out on the table in front of him and Harry knows that he's not.

Snape has pulled dozens of old issues of *The Daily Prophet* from the archives. Harry sees his own face, '**Undesirable No. 1**' blinking garishly on one page. Another issue proclaims: '**Boy Who Lives Boy Who Lies?: There is Nothing to Fear Says the Minister.**' And another: '**Harry Potter, The Chosen One?**'

Another *Prophet* shows a sweeping field dotted with tents, many of which have been set aflame. '**Scenes of Terror at the Quidditch World Cup**' and '**Dark Mark Ignites Unprecedented Wizard Panic**' is printed below.

Harry sees the rocks of Azkaban, shrouded in mist below the headline: '**Mass Breakout from Azkaban.**' And Dumbledore, blinking serenely up from another page: '**Dumbledore: Daft or Dangerous?**'

Harry takes a deep breath as his eyes sweep over headline after headline.

'Sirius Black Man Hunt Ordered'

'Dumbledore, Potter Vindicated'

'Minister to Resign?'

'Hogwarts Headmaster Reinstated'

'Albus Dumbledore Remembered'

And then: '**HE WHO MUST NOT BE NAMED RETURNS**'

"Hey, hey," Harry says, gently, putting a hand on his shoulder. Snape startles. "Severus, I need you to look at me."

Snape turns towards Harry and blinks. He's still holding one issue, hand clenched tightly around the yellowing paper. Harry takes it from him, smoothing its edges. It reads: '**New Headmaster for Hogwarts: Severus Snape Confirmed**'

"Come on," he says, drawing his wand. He sorts the papers and sends them back to their storage files. "Let's get out of here."

"I killed him," Snape says. "I killed Professor Dumbledore."

"I know," Harry says, helping him to his feet. "I know you did. But it's not what you think it is, and we need to go."

Snape jerks away, shaking Harry's hand off his shoulder. "What do you mean?" he says too loudly. "I *killed* him."

"Please," Harry says. "I promise I will tell you everything. But not here. You have to come with me now."

Snape looks around. For the first time, he seems to realise that they're in the library, that there are other students around. He nods, slipping his feet into his shoes. He stands, and Harry places a hand on his back, walks with him out into the hallway. Harry doesn't bother with his office. He takes Snape straight to his rooms.

Once inside, he locks and wards the door, and leads Snape to his sofa. "Here," he says. "Sit. I'll get some tea."

In the adjoining kitchenette, he fills the kettle, heating it instantly with a wave of his hand. Usually, he prefers to do it on the cook top, but not tonight. He pours two cups and, after a moment's thought, adds a splash of Firewhisky to each.

"Drink this," he says, setting the tea on the coffee table in front of Snape. The boy's got his head down, elbows braced on his knees. Harry sits down beside him. "You shouldn't have looked."

Snape looks up, dark eyes shadowed. "Wouldn't you have?"

Harry can't deny it.

"You have to tell me now."

"Okay."

And Harry does. He tells Snape how, at twenty-one, he came back to Dumbledore to protect his mother, but how—when Voldemort killed her and his father, and he survived the Killing Curse—he vowed to protect Harry. And how, thirteen years later, when Voldemort came back from the dead, Snape returned to his side as a spy. "You were so brave," Harry says. "And you were good. No one knew. No one ever knew."

Snape takes a deep, shuddering breath. "And the war?"

"Dumbledore knew what to do," Harry says. "He figured out what Voldemort had done. You wouldn't have seen this in the papers. Afterwards, we kept it a secret. It was better that way because, you see, Voldemort had found a way to separate his soul. And while those fragments survived, he could not die. Not really." He takes a sip of tea, sets the cup down again. "It took years to hunt them down, and all the while you were working with Dumbledore, passing on information, and keeping me safe."

“But I killed him,” Snape says. He raises his head, looks at Harry. His eyes are red-rimmed, cheeks tear-streaked, but he’s not crying. “I murdered Professor Dumbledore.”

“You did,” Harry says, placing a hand on his arm. “But it was necessary.”

“Necessary!” Snape jerks away, nearly spilling his tea. Harry takes it from him gently. Snape stands, backing away from the sofa. “What do you mean, necessary? I killed him. I’m a murderer. How could that be necessary?”

“We were all murderers,” Harry says, carefully, gently. “It was war.”

“But Dumbledore...” Snape says, and he sounds broken. It makes Harry feel ill. “I...he...” He looks down. His hands are clasped together so tightly his knuckles are white. “He believed in me.”

“I know,” Harry says, “and that’s why it had to be you. That’s why Dumbledore asked you to do what no one else could. Do you want to see?”

Snape looks up. “You would show me?”

“If you want.”

“Yes.”

Legilimency without resistance is invasive. But it’s also intimate. Harry opens his mind, allows Snape in. He’s surprisingly gentle. Already practised, subtle. Harry shows him the trial. His defence of Snape, as he laid out, detail by detail, after precise and painstaking detail. He shows him Minerva and Filius’s testimonies. Hermione and Ron. Then Dumbledore’s memories, meticulously curated, warded, and left behind to clear Snape’s name.

Harry does not show him his own memories. The ones Snape, dying, gave to him in the shack. He fears that would be both jarring and cruel. But he shows him how he walked into the Forbidden Forest. He shows him the Avada Kedavra. And then, he shows him how he came back to kill Voldemort once and for all.

Snape is shaking by the time they are done. And Harry feels pulled apart, exposed, and paper-thin.

“I think we need more whisky,” Harry says, standing. He must steady himself, hand out on the back of the sofa, as the room spins around him. But he takes a deep breath, and his vision clears. He walks to the kitchen for the bottle.

“He knows.”

“What do you mean?” Hermione is standing by the counter, a glass of wine in her hand. Harry takes the pot from the cooker, drains the pasta.

“Snape. He went back through old *Prophets*. He shouldn’t have done, and he knows he shouldn’t have, but I understand why he did.”

Hermione nods, setting her glass down. She takes two plates down from the cupboard and the plastic bowl with the Crup painted on it that Harry keeps for Rose.

Harry stirs the sauce, adding a generous handful of Parmesan and some pepper before ladling it onto their pasta. Ron’s been working a case with MACUSA that requires travel back and forth to

New York. Often, on nights when he's gone, Hermione will Floo to the castle with Rose to eat dinner with Harry.

"How did he take it?" Hermione scoops Rose up from where she's playing on the rug by the sofa. Harry's charmed a herd of plastic Hippogriffs to dance in formation for her.

"Not well," Harry says. "As you'd expect."

Hermione puts Rose in her chair, sets her bowl of spaghetti in front of her. Then she turns back to the counter to refill their wine glasses. Harry takes his from her with a smile and levitates their two plates to the table. They could order from the kitchens. The house-elves are happy to serve dinner to faculty in their own rooms, but Hermione prefers to cook. Harry knows it's because she still has reservations about the elves' terms of service, but he's happy to oblige.

"I let him use Legilimency on me."

"You what now?" Hermione sets down her glass; wine sloshes over onto her fingers.

"I wanted him to see. He needed to be able to see."

Hermione looks at Rose. She's already covered in marinara sauce; there's a noodle in her hair. She loves spaghetti. It's one of her favourites. When she turns back to Harry, her face is drawn. "But Legilimency? Harry, you know how dangerous that can be. Especially if he's unpractised."

"I know. But he was surprisingly precise—for a teenager. And it was a worthwhile risk." Harry sits down at the table, cracks some pepper onto his pasta. "His magic..." he shakes his head. "Merlin, if you could feel it. It's so much like Snape that it gave me goose bumps. He's already so strong and, well, I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. It is Snape, after all."

"Yes," Hermione says, though her voice is sad. She twirls some pasta around her fork. "He can't go back now, Harry," she says softly. "You know that. Not knowing everything he does."

"I know." Harry takes a long sip of wine. "I know."

"Now, how are our new students doing?" Minerva sifts through the parchments in front of her.

Harry leans back in his chair. Staff meetings are never his favourite thing, but this one promises to be particularly lengthy and dull. They're over a month into term and Minerva likes to check in on all the new students to determine what type of remediation, if any, might be necessary to help them succeed.

Harry pulls a scrap of paper from his pocket. He's got a sixth year from the States who, while—according to Filius—is excelling at Charms, appears to be woefully underprepared for Defence. There's a previously home-schooled second year that's clearly been taught that defensive magic is no longer a necessary or appropriate skill for a young wizard to learn. And a set of third year twins from Beauxbatons who, though intelligent, have difficulty casting even the most basic of spells.

Alasdair Taylor, the Transfiguration teacher, agrees with Harry's assessment of Amabel and Anais Dejardin's casting abilities, and Molly O'Connor calls Mark Tisdall's Potions abilities worse than abysmal, so Harry feels secure in his judgements.

Once Harry says what he needs to say, he does his very best to not tune out the rest of the discussion, but it's hard. He's not sure what it is about staff meetings that makes people love

nothing more than to hear themselves talk. But even Minerva seems to tire of the ordeal, as she puts down her quill and says: “Good. This is very useful information. I’m certain we will all do our best to see that these students are—”

She doesn’t have the chance to finish, though because O’Connor speaks up, interrupting. “I’m sorry Headmistress, but I had one more thing...”

“Yes, Molly?” she says patiently.

“It’s about Severus Prince...”

Harry sits up straighter in his chair.

“Oh?” Minerva frowns, flips through her notes once more. “His marks are excellent. He seems to be adjusting. I’ve heard no complaints or concerns over behaviour...”

“No, no,” O’Connor agrees. “He’s a model student—a bit guarded, defensive at times, but,” she looks down at the notepad before her, as though unsure if she should continue, “but I have some integrity concerns.”

“Integrity?”

“Yes. His work is excellent but sometimes it seems, well, almost too good.”

“What do you mean?” Minerva asks carefully.

“In class he alters recipes and makes adjustments to our brewing procedures without instruction. I provide step-by-step directions or, at times, students follow along in their textbook. But Mr. Prince...” She bites her lip, glances around the staff table before continuing. “The improvements he makes—he must be referencing some outside source.”

“Do you not allow students to conduct outside research on potions you’re brewing in class?”

“No,” O’Connor says. “Supplemental research is fine. But students must give credit if they use outside material to aid in their work. And, I’m not sure how he knows which potions we’ll be brewing. Unless, somehow, he has accessed my curriculum?”

“Isn’t it possible he has brewed the potions before?” Filius asks, with a quick look to Minerva and Harry.

“The boy is talented, Molly,” Pomona adds. “You’d think he had access to my Herbology notes some days, but no. He’s just a natural.”

“Perhaps,” O’Connor says, clearly not convinced. “But then there’s his essays. His grasp of theory is unlike anything I’ve ever seen, not in a seventh year, at least. He understands techniques that are not taught until mastery level. And some of his ideas? I don’t think they’re original.”

“Have you performed the appropriate plagiarism and copying detection spells?” Minerva asks.

“I have.” O’Connor looks down. “And nothing comes up, but—”

“And have you asked Mr. Prince to explain his work? Surely you could tell if he were attempting to pass off someone else’s ideas as his own.”

“No, he’s always able to defend his work and he truly seems to have an innate grasp of potions, but —”

“Molly, your concern is admirable,” Minerva says, stopping her. “And in any other case, I would likely agree with your suspicions. But I must assure you that Severus’s situation is...unique. And while I am not at liberty to reveal specifics, I will personally vouch for his honesty here. You must trust me on this. His abilities are, indeed, unmatched. Challenge him. Give him additional resources. Let him surprise you.”

It’s nearly midnight as Harry climbs the steps of the Astronomy Tower, but he isn’t tired and he likes to come up here to be alone, to think. The steep climb always brings back a flood of memories, but it no longer induces the grief, the anger it used to. Instead he feels at peace, at ease.

He knows the boy is there, however, before he even reaches the top. He knows it as surely as he knows Snape knows he’s coming. Harry has always been able to sense his magic. He remembers the way it used to feel in the castle and, then, on the battlefield those times they fought against (beside) one another. But now Harry feels Snape’s magic more strongly still, and he doesn’t like to think about why.

He steps out onto the landing. Snape’s there, leaning against the parapet. And he’s smoking. The night is cool and clear. The stars look like a thousand pinpricks against the jet-black sky.

“Those are really awful for you, you know,” Harry says, moving to stand beside him.

Snape exhales a thin stream of smoke into the air, looks down at the cigarette in his hand.

“They’ve done studies now and everything. Guaranteed to cause cancer.”

Snape looks at him, unimpressed. He takes another drag off the cigarette. “I’m breathing smoke and nicotine into my lungs. I can feel it burning. Do you truly think I need some contemporary Muggle doctor to tell me this isn’t healthy?”

“Fair enough,” Harry says. “It’s after curfew.”

“Obviously.” Snape holds out the cigarette and Harry takes it. It’s intimate, his mouth on the filter where Snape’s lips have been. He breathes in, then coughs.

“I take it you’re not a smoker?”

“I told you those things are bad for you,” Harry manages, wheezing.

Snape laughs, takes another long drag. “You’re truly horrid at enforcing rules, you know.”

“I enforce them. Took twenty points from Gryffindor today, actually. I just don’t...” He stops, suddenly hesitant to acknowledge his blatant favouritism out loud.

“You just don’t enforce them with me,” Snape finishes gently.

“Apparently not.” He doesn’t look at Snape. The night is dark. The moon is only a thin slash against the sky, but the stars are brilliant up here.

“Was there something between us?” Snape asks after a moment. “Before?”

The question startles Harry, though perhaps it shouldn’t. Ron practically said as much. And Hermione... But he and Snape? The idea is absurd, isn’t it? “No,” Harry says honestly. “You hated me.”

“Hated you?” Snape frowns. “But your memories. You said we worked together, that I helped you.”

“You did,” Harry says. “And I meant it when I said I couldn’t have defeated Voldemort without you. But you did it because it was the right thing to do and because you were a good man. Not because you liked me.”

Snape stubs his cigarette out against the stone ledge. “I don’t believe I would have hated you.”

Harry laughs. “I didn’t understand it at first. I was just a kid. I had no idea what I could have done. But I think I must have reminded you of my father.”

“You do look like him. You both have ridiculous hair.” He reaches out, as if to touch Harry, but then Snape pulls away, shoves his hands into his pockets. He looks back out over the grounds and clears his throat. “And your glasses. Though, yours are a bit more stylish.”

Harry snorts. “They didn’t used to be. I’ve never made *Witch Weekly’s* cover for being the most fashionable wizard, that’s for sure.”

Snape turns to look him up and down, taking in Harry’s worn Weasley jumper, faded jeans, scuffed trainers. “You don’t say?” He narrows his eyes. “Wait, you said that as though you’ve *actually* been on the cover of *Witch Weekly*.”

“I might have done,” Harry says, dragging his toe along the ground.

“Of course.” Snape laughs. “Of course you have.”

“Do you think,” Snape says then, “if things had been different. If I’d...if we’d...” He looks down, cheeks pinking slightly. “That you would have...before?”

“That I would have become involved with a teacher?” Harry says, stomach twisting at the implications there. But he can answer honestly: “No, I wouldn’t have.” He laughs but it’s a harsh sound. “I spent the majority of my school years trying not to get killed. There wasn’t much time for anything else. Let alone a highly inappropriate relationship.” He looks at Snape pointedly because this conversation is already pushing the boundaries of what would be considered acceptable and he worries that, somewhere, somehow, he’s given the wrong idea. “*Christ*, I didn’t even have time for a normal relationship.”

“No?” Snape asks, surprise in his voice. “And here I thought the boys would have been queuing up for their chance with you.”

“There were a few girls,” Harry says, thinking of Cho and Ginny. “But nothing serious.”

“Girls?” Snape raises an eyebrow.

Harry shrugs. “I didn’t even realise I liked men until after the war. My first, no, my second year of Auror training.”

“Yeah? And what clued you in?”

“How does anyone find out what turns them on?” Harry says. “I got drunk in a pub one night and sucked some bloke off in the loo. Got me harder than any girl ever had.”

“Fuck,” Snape says. “That’s...”

Harry realises what he's just said. And to a student. "*Oh god*. I'm so sorry," he says quickly. "This conversation is inappropriate. I didn't mean to—"

"I kissed your mum once," Snape says, cutting him off. "Or, really, she kissed me. Fourth year." He pushes his hair back behind his ear. "It was...nice. But, of course it was. She was my best friend and she's so beautiful." He looks down at his feet. "But I'm pretty sure she only did it to prove a point."

"Oh?" Harry says, grateful for the change of subject, but not sure he wants to hear what Snape means. He doesn't like to think of his mother as someone who'd kiss someone just to "prove" something.

But then Snape laughs. "Yeah, I'm pretty sure she knew I was gay before I knew myself. And she was right." He shrugs. "Tits have never done a thing for me."

"They're all right, I suppose," Harry says. "If you're into that sort of thing."

"But you're not," Snape says.

"No. I'm not."

They're quiet for a few minutes. Far below, a tentacle breaks the surface of the lake, sending ripples outward towards the shore.

"Glad to know the squid is still alive and well," Snape says.

"Thank Merlin. How old do you think that thing is?"

"No idea." Snape digs into his pocket for the crushed packet of cigarettes. Harry really should take points or, at the very least, send Snape back to his dormitory. But he feels off kilter; the boy makes him lose his footing.

So, instead, he takes the fag from him and holds it to his own lips, lights it with the touch of a finger.

Snape gasps at the burst of power

"Here," Harry says, holding it out.

Snape takes it. "Your magic brought me here."

"I know."

"Why?"

"Because I should have been able to save you."

"Is that all?"

"I...I don't know."

"How are you?" Harry sits down beside Snape. He's outside, on the steps leading down from the main courtyard.

Snape shrugs. "I'm fine."

Harry looks at him and Snape rolls his eyes. "What do you want me to say?"

"I dunno, maybe the truth?"

Snape huffs. He leans forward, wrapping his arms around his knees. "You're intolerable."

"Maybe, but I'd still like to know how you're doing."

Snape stares moodily in front of him, but answers. "Some days are better than others. I miss my mum. I miss Reg. I miss my cat." He looks up at Harry and he is struck by the sadness in Snape's eyes and, once again, by how young he is. "I had a cat, did you know?"

"No."

"Well, I did. Do you think..." Snape sighs, shoulders slumping. His hair falls into his face. "My friend Mulciber liked him. Do you think, if I'm gone?" He closes his eyes, pinches the bridge of his nose.

"I'm sure your cat will be well taken care of." He doesn't say that there is no cat, that they both know this already. After all, if they accept what they know about time—and why shouldn't they?—then the cat has been dead for years. But Snape nods once. "I know I'm lucky, too. I really do. I got this second chance and I should be grateful but..." Snape trails off glumly.

"You don't have to be grateful," Harry says. "My magic pulled you from your life. You lost everything. And it's okay to be sad. It's okay to be angry."

"I know. But I'm not angry. Not really. Not any more." Snape twists side to side until his spine cracks with an audible pop. Then: "God, I was such an idiot."

"What do you mean?"

Snape holds out his left arm, rolls up his sleeve. He turns his arm over slowly. His skin is the colour of milk. Pale and unblemished. Snape draws a finger down his forearm, traces the line of a vein beneath his skin. "He was so charming—Riddle," he adds, as if Harry doesn't know whom he's talking about. "And I bought it." He shakes his head. "Every fucking bit of it." Harry can hear the disgust in his voice. "But he had this way of telling you exactly what you wanted to hear. And he *wanted* me." He looks at Harry, something desperate in his expression. "Do you know how that feels? And I...I wanted so badly to be wanted. To be a part of something."

Harry doesn't say he understands because he doesn't. He's not sure he'll ever really understand why Snape joined Voldemort. But he reaches out, places his hand on Snape's knee. The boy's skin is warm beneath the fabric of his trousers.

"But now I've read about all the horrible things he did. All the pain he caused, and I can't believe I was so stupid."

They sit there for a long time. The sun has set. The sky shifting from rosy pink to mauve to blue-black. Harry hears noises behind them from inside the castle. Students are making their way to the Great Hall for dinner. He should go back inside, take his place at the Head Table. "I'm glad you're here," he finally says, standing.

Snape looks up at him, dark eyes shadowed. "I think I am too."

“Professor Potter?”

Harry looks up from his marking. Snape stands in the doorway. He’s not wearing his robes; his white school shirt is un-tucked. One rumpled shirttail hangs out over his dark wool trousers.

“Office hours are nearly over.”

“I know.” There is something in Snape’s voice that tightens in Harry’s throat. He swallows and motions towards Snape’s appearance. “Your attire, Mr. Prince.”

“Oh, right.” He dips his head slightly, affecting a small bow, then proceeds to yank the rest of his shirt out of his trousers, exposing a thin slice of flat stomach. He’s not wearing a belt. Harry sees the arch of a hipbone, the shadowed hollow beneath. He looks away. Still, he can’t help but glance up again as Snape adjusts his clothing.

Harry’s eyes follow pale hands as they slide inside his trousers and back out again, smoothing down the fabric.

He swallows thickly. The room shouldn’t be this warm. He straightens the essays in front of him, running his hand down the edge of the stack of parchments.

When Harry looks up again, Snape is watching him, mouth quirked in a half smile. He raises an eyebrow. “Acceptable?”

“Yeah,” he manages, more flustered than he has any right to be. “So, er, was there something you needed?”

“I’d like you to help me with my shielding.”

Harry frowns. “Your shield spells are excellent. They’re the best in your year.”

“Yours are better.”

“Yes.”

“So I’d like you to help me. If you don’t mind, that is.”

“All right,” Harry says. He picks up his teacup but, finding only dregs, sets it down again. “Tomorrow in the Defence room. Nine o’clock.”

“Thank you.” Snape turns to go but stops, hand on the doorknob. “Is it true you can block the Killing Curse?”

“I have before.”

Snape nods. “I want you to show me how.”

They duel.

Snape is strong. He’s creative and he’s precise. His control is better than most witches’ and wizards’ Harry knows. And Snape is only seventeen. But Harry is not surprised. Not really. He’s familiar with Snape’s magic, of course, from before.

But Snape's spellwork is not yet so fluid, so intuitive as Harry remembers.

"You're thinking too hard," Harry says, deflecting a hex, twisting his wand, knocking Snape off his feet.

Snape's breathing hard. He looks up from where he's on his hands and knees. "And you would suggest what? Not thinking?"

Harry laughs. "No, that's not what I mean. You're telegraphing your spells. I find that happens when you plan out what you intend to do before you cast."

"How do I fight if I don't plan my attack? And don't tell me to just react. I *know* that's not what you do."

"No," Harry says. "But you have to feel your magic. Duelling is as much emotional as psychological."

Snape does not look convinced. "I'm starting to understand why I disliked you as a student."

Harry snorts. "Yeah? Why?"

"Because you're so bloody talented. It just comes so easily for you, doesn't it?" Snape climbs to his feet again. "You just make your magic do whatever you want it to do, don't you?"

"Of course I do." Harry grins. "But that doesn't mean I haven't worked for it...if that's indeed what you're implying, Mr. Prince."

They're back in the Defence room.

Snape's getting better. He's still methodical, choreographed. But he's not nearly as predictable. And it helps that he seems to invent spells as easy as breathing.

"What the hell was that?" Harry asks, flexing his fingers. He'd blocked it, but his arm is tingling, and he'd felt the magic as his shield absorbed it.

"Did it work?" Snape asks. "I can never tell with you. You block everything."

"I felt it. If it had hit me? Yeah, it would have been good."

"I still don't understand how your shields work like they do."

"I want them to." Harry grabs the water bottle from the table at the side of the room. Takes a long drink.

"You just...*want* them to?" Snape closes his eyes, takes a deep breath. Then he takes another. "You do realise how infuriating you are, yeah?"

"You can do it too." Harry says. "I know you can."

"No. I can't"

"You can. But you need to work on your intention."

"Intention."

“That’s how the best magic works. And that’s how I make my shields do exactly what I want them to do.” Harry sits down on the floor, stretches his legs out in front of him. Snape sits down beside him.

“You asked me once how I could block a Killing Curse.”

“I did.”

“It’s pretty simple, really.” Harry runs a hand through his hair. It’s damp with sweat. “I wanted to.”

“You wanted to. Of course you did.” Snape leans his head back against the wall. His hair catches against the brick. Harry looks at the line of his throat, the swell of his Adam’s apple.

“There are myriad iterations of a shielding spell,” Harry says. “You know this. But it doesn’t matter if you know four shields or four hundred. Because if you’re powerful enough—which you are—and you understand the magic, then you can adapt your shielding to any situation. And, if you *want* to, you can block anything, regardless of what you cast. After all, the spell works for the wizard. Not the other way around.”

“You’ve killed people.”

“I have,” Harry answers carefully.

Snape closes the door to Harry’s office behind him but does not move further into the room.

“And it was...” Snape looks down, twisting the strap of his bag around his fingers. “How did you—how are you...?” He does not sound eager or even intrigued. He sounds frantic.

“Do you want to sit down?”

Snape shakes his head, one quick jerk side-to-side.

“I was seventeen,” Harry says, “the first time. It was hard. Made me sick to my stomach for days. And it never gets easier. It’s one of the reasons I quit the Aurors. I realised I never wanted to have to kill anyone ever again. That part of my life is over and I’m glad it’s behind me.”

“It’s expected,” Snape says softly, “when you join him, that is, that you’ll have to at some point. That you’d do that. That you’d do...anything.”

Harry nods and waits for him to continue.

Snape looks down, eyes dark, shadowed. Finally he takes a deep, shuddery breath. “He doesn’t make you though. Not at first, anyway. It’s not a requirement. Or an initiation.” Harry hears the sadness in Snape’s voice, and his chest aches for the boy Snape was. The boy so desperate to belong, that he signed his life away to a madman.

“I never wanted to kill anyone. That wasn’t...” He takes another slow breath. “That isn’t why I wanted to join.”

Harry knows this is difficult. Talking about it. Saying the words out loud. But he also understands the need to get it out. So he doesn’t say anything. He lets Snape continue.

“It’s part of the appeal though, for some. I know that. So many of his followers are drawn to the promise of violence. They’re excited to have a reason, an excuse to do horrible things.”

“That never changed,” Harry says. He thinks of the Carrows, rotting in Azkaban. Of Antonin Dolohov and Walden Macnair, dead at the Battle of Hogwarts. He thinks of Greyback and the Lestranges. Of Vincent Crabbe and so many others who revelled in the opportunities for violence that Voldemort’s service allowed them.

Snape nods. “But it wasn’t like that for me. I never wanted to hurt anyone.”

“And now you don’t have to.”

Before Harry can blink, it’s Hallowe’en.

The students are distracted all day. It’s maddening. Nothing gets done. They might as well cancel classes. By lunchtime, students can talk of nothing else save the feast and the accompanying party. He assigns reading in his afternoon classes. He’d rather not risk a student ending up in the hospital wing thanks to negligent or distracted casting.

The feast, though, lives up to the excitement. The elves have outdone themselves, and Hagrid’s decorations are marvellous. Hundreds of bats fly in between pumpkins charmed to float in midair. The larger ones have been carved into lanterns and lit with magical flame. Purple, orange, and black streamers hang from the ceiling, and caldrons line the centre aisle, bubbling and foaming with acid green liquid.

“Name one potion that actually looks like that.”

“I’m guessing none?”

And you’d be correct. Snape leans back against the wall beside Harry.

He’s wearing a cape over a high collared, old-fashioned looking shirt that could have come straight from his former self’s wardrobe.

“What are you supposed to be?”

Snape rolls his eyes, but raises his arms in a bat-like pose. “Vampire.” He bares his teeth, revealing plastic fangs. “Eloise Leggett offered to charm them for me but I know better.”

“Good call, that,” Harry says, taking a sip of his tea. He tries not to wince. Filius handed it to him a few minutes ago and it’s clearly more whisky than tea. The man knows the best way to make it through an all-school celebration.

Minerva has allowed Iris Pendergrass and Theo Becker to DJ and students cheer as the discordant notes of a new cover song by *Spellbound* fills the Great Hall.

“Circe,” Snape says. “This song wasn’t even good the first time.”

“I don’t think music in the Wizarding world has improved all that much.”

They stand together for a few minutes. Snape’s got his arms folded across his chest, the cape wrapped tightly around him. He’s combed his hair down the centre so it hangs in two dark sheets on either side of his face. While perhaps not conventionally attractive, Harry can’t help but find him striking—plastic fangs and all.

“Yes?” he says, looking at Harry pointedly, one eyebrow raised. Harry’s cheeks heat as he realises

he's staring.

"There was a rumour once, back when I was a student, that you were actually a vampire."

Snape snorts. "Gryffindors are idiots."

"Maybe. But it wasn't just Gryffindors, I'll have you know. There were some Slytherins as well. Though, come to think of it, I doubt many of them took it seriously. Probably thought it brilliant to have some poor first year terrified their Head of House might decide to start drinking their blood if they botched a potion. As if you weren't terrifying enough already."

"Head of House?"

Harry looks at him. "Yeah. You didn't know?"

Snape shakes his head. "When?"

"I don't know. Dumbledore told me once you were the youngest professor ever hired at Hogwarts, and you were already Slytherin Head when I got here in 1991. So you were what? Thirty?"

Snape nods, nearly laughs. "Do you have any idea how strange my life has been these last few months?"

"No. And that's saying something considering my sixth and seventh year."

"I gathered as much from *The Prophet's* obsessive chronicling of your daily activities."

"They were rather fond of me."

At that, Snape does laugh, a sharp burst of sound. "Right, that's one way of saying it. Did you even complete your seventh year?"

"Nope, never finished."

"And yet you were apparently an Auror and, now, you're Defence Master. Standards these days seem decidedly lacking. Though considering my own history and employment, I shouldn't be surprised."

"I got my N.E.W.T.s and you're brilliant, so there's that. Though," Harry takes a sip of his not-tea, "considering the hiring record here, some scepticism may indeed be in order."

"Do I want to know?"

Harry thinks of Quirrell and Lockhart, of Remus and Crouch masquerading as Mad-Eye. He thinks of Umbridge, though, to be fair, the Minister did force Dumbledore's hand on that one. Harry clenches his fist around his mug, the silvery smooth *I must not tell lies*... still visible all these years later. "Best not."

The music changes. Students begin singing along to yet another *Weird Sisters* hit. If anything, Harry must give them credit for longevity.

"Shouldn't you be, I dunno, monitoring student activity or something?" Snape asks.

"What do you think I'm doing?"

"Hiding in the corner drinking something that definitely wasn't on the approved list of beverages

for the evening.”

“Hahaha. Well, despite your former self’s proclivities, not every professor takes pleasure in finding students in various states of misbehaviour.”

“Didn’t willingly volunteer for chaperon duties tonight, eh?”

Harry laughs. “No. But McGonagall needed extra help.”

“Well then, Fitzpatrick spiked the pumpkin juice in case, you know, you’re supposed to actually do something about that.”

“I’m sure Filch is on it.” And, sure enough, the words are barely out of his mouth when Harry sees Argus descending on the refreshments table. “That man may be a Squib, but he can sniff out contraband better than any wizard I know. Pity, I would have liked to have tried that,” he says, as Argus carts the punch bowl away.

Snape shudders.

“Mr. Prince, are you suggesting you’re not a fan of unauthorised beverages?”

Snape shrugs. “I’m not a fan of pumpkin juice, more like. And what Fitzpatrick added? Let’s just say Ogden’s would have been an improvement.”

“I like Ogden’s.”

“Of course you do.”

They stand there for a few more minutes. Pomona and Filius are dancing to a particularly awful *Glory for Ghouls* song. Students are giving them an understandably wide berth.

“Speaking of what *I* should be doing, wouldn’t you prefer to, well, be doing pretty much anything else?”

“I can’t think of a few things, actually.” Snape looks at him sideways then and there is something in his expression that Harry can’t read properly, but he’s rather certain the warmth twisting in his stomach has nothing to do with the alcohol.

Harry ignores the flutter and twist in his stomach whenever he sees Snape now. He tries to tell himself it’s simply the natural response to knowing that *this* Snape does not have to die. That, regardless of everything, his wish magic did some good. And that he sees, with each passing day, Snape developing into his potential, into the magic Harry knows he has.

But deep down he knows that’s not the case. He recognizes the illicit appeal, the attraction he is not willing to acknowledge, and he hates himself for such...feelings. He hates that the boy’s mere presence in his classroom makes him want things he really should not want.

Yet, the way Snape sometimes looks at him thrills him more than anything has in a long, long time.

“This is for you.”

Harry looks up from the book he’s reading. Hermione sent it over from the Ministry archives.

There are substantial sections on wish and intentional magic, but no solution. Nothing that could unravel the spellwork that brought Snape thirty years into his future.

And especially not now. Not when it's been nearly three months since Harry—albeit unknowingly—cast the spell. He knows this. Hermione knows this. But to stop looking would be giving up. And doesn't he owe Snape enough not to do that?

Snape sits down in the chair beside him, slides a piece of parchment in front of Harry. His breath catches. It's the picture Snape drew of his mum. The one he showed him that day by the lake.

"I thought you might like to have it."

"I... yes." Harry's mouth is dry.

Snape finished the drawing. He smoothed the rough lines and erased the smudges. And he added some colour. Not on the whole thing. But her hair is now a brilliant red. And her eyes. They are the green of clover and of mint. Of summer grass and forest trees.

"It's beautiful."

"I'm not going back."

"Hmm?" Harry's distracted by the picture, by his mother's smile, the freckles on her cheeks.

"I know I'm not going back." Snape's looking down at what Harry was reading. The chapter details the difficulties in cancelling wish magic with other wish magic. "And that's okay. I think I'm going to be okay."

"Fuck..." Snape's bent over, hands on his knees. He's breathing hard. "Your magic..."

"Language, Mr. Prince."

The look he gives Harry is withering. "You can't tell me you don't feel that."

"You're getting stronger. Better at countering me. At incorporating your original magic." Harry shakes his head. "Whatever that last spell was? *Merlin*."

"It didn't even hit you."

"I know and I still felt it."

Snape doesn't look like he believes him, but he nods. "That's not what I meant, though."

"Oh?" Harry waves his hand, moving the tables back into place from where he'd pushed them aside, allowing space to duel.

"I know you're bloody powerful, but your magic, the way it feels when we fight? Please tell me I haven't gone mad because I've never felt anything like that before."

"I feel it," Harry says carefully. Because he does. He's felt it for weeks, though he's tried to ignore what it must mean.

"There's a connection between us," Snape says. "It happens sometimes when a wizard is so... significantly impacted by another's magic. I've read about it," he adds quickly, as though

anticipating some objection. But Harry only nods.

“I know.”

Harry was connected to Voldemort because of the Horcrux. That’s why the magic always felt so invasive, so sickening. But, likely, there would have been some link between them regardless because Harry survived a Killing Curse cast by Voldemort’s hand.

But this—rather than repulsive, foreign—this is intimate. And it’s addictive.

Harry sits down, drawing his knees up to his chest. He leans back against the wall, the stone cool even through the fabric of his jumper.

“Not to mention the life debt.” Snape sits beside him, stares straight ahead. “I owed your father a life debt, too.”

“Yeah, well, considering he tried to kill you first and only saved you because he realised he didn’t actually want to be responsible for the murder of a classmate? I don’t think that counts.” Harry hears the disgust in his voice. The years have dulled some of the anger he once felt at the way his father and Sirius—and Remus, too, by sheer complacency—treated Snape. But now, with Snape alive again in his present, those feelings have been dredged up and Harry doesn’t like it.

“You know about that? The werewolf?”

“Yeah, and I’m sorry. My dad was an arse. There’s no excuse for it.”

“No.”

“But despite what the magic might think, you don’t owe me anything.”

“Yes I—”

“No. Do you want to know the number of times you saved my life? Because, honestly, I think I lost count. So let’s just consider ourselves equal now.”

“All right.” Snape rests his head back against the wall, eyes closed, hair catching on the rough stone.

Harry looks at the long line of his neck, and does not think about the night of the final battle. About the snake and the blood. *Christ*, there was so much blood, as Harry pressed his hands to Snape’s throat, trying to staunch the flow. Instead he thinks about the paleness of Snape’s skin, about the thrum of his pulse beating beneath the surface there. *Alive, alive, alive...*

“I think about you,” Snape says, and while he does not open his eyes, Harry sees the flutter of long lashes against his cheeks. “And I dream about you too. At first I thought it was just the magic. But I know now it’s not.”

Harry doesn’t say anything; he just exhales unsteadily, listens to the roar of his heart in his ears.

“And when I... well, you know. It never takes long.”

Harry’s breath catches and he realises he’s half-hard in his trousers. “Mr. Prince...Severus, please. We can’t be having this conversation.”

“Why not? Your magic brought me here. You can’t deny that means something. And it’s not going to go away just because you’re set on ignoring it.”

“Stop.” Harry presses his fingers to his temples. “You’re seventeen. You are my student.” (*And I was yours...*). “I can’t. I won’t.”

“I’ll be eighteen in less than two months. And I won’t be your student forever.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Of course it does.” Snape swallows. Harry’s eyes fall to the rise and fall of his throat. “I get hard in class sometimes. Just watching you. That and feeling your stupid magic.”

Harry’s mouth is dry. He can’t speak; he can’t look at Snape.

“Last week I had to get myself off, afterward. In the loo before my next class.” His voice is very low; Harry can hardly hear him over the pounding of his heart. “Otherwise, I thought I might come in my pants.”

“*Fuck*,” the word is out before Harry can stop himself. “I...” his voice is strained.

“I’m sorry.” Snape stands suddenly. Harry watches as he adjusts himself. Can’t help but notice the bulge in his trousers. “But I needed you to know.”

That night, when Harry wraps his hand around his cock, he thinks about Snape’s magic, the way it tugs at his spine and sparks in his bloodstream. And, as he strokes himself off, he hates himself for wondering what Snape’s pale skin would look like if he were naked and stretched out above him in his bed.

When Harry comes, desperate and shuddering against his pillow, he imagines what Snape would taste like, if he pressed his mouth to his.

And afterward, Harry does not feel nearly as guilty as, perhaps, he should.

“Hey,” Harry says, sitting down beside Snape. It’s been five days since they last duelled. Since Snape said those things which permanently shifted Harry’s perception of reality.

“Hey,” Snape says carefully.

It’s past curfew. Snape’s sitting cross-legged in an alcove just down the hall from the Slytherin common room, his Potions text open in his lap.

“You could study in your dorm, you know.”

“Obviously. But I prefer it here. It’s quiet. And my housemates are...” He trails off. “They’re fine, really. And I don’t think anyone’s a Death Eater, which is an improvement. But—”

“It’s okay,” Harry says, putting a hand on Snape’s knee. “You don’t have to explain anything to me.”

“Thanks.” Snape turns a page in his book, makes a note in the margin. The narrow, cramped writing makes Harry’s stomach tighten.

“You know,” he says, “my sixth year I didn’t have a Potions text. So Slughorn lent me one he found in a cabinet. There were all these notes scribbled in the margins. Lines crossed out. All these

comments and lewd jokes written in their place. And the spells. *Merlin* the spells..." Harry shakes his head. "I didn't know whose book it was, but I had the biggest fucking crush on him." He pauses, looks down again at the writing in Snape's book. "There wasn't a name in the cover or anything. Just 'Property of the Half Blood Prince.'"

"The Half Blood Prince?"

"I found out later it was you."

"You had a crush on me because of the stupid things I write in my books."

Harry nods. "I wasn't pleased when I found out, mind. You were my professor, you'd convinced us all you were a Death Eater, and we didn't like each other very much besides. But yeah, I wanted you."

Snape's fingers are cold and Harry gasps a little when he leans in, cups Harry's face in his hands and kisses him.

Harry should stop him. He should pull back, should push him away, should absolutely not sink into the kiss, not open his mouth to swallow the noises Snape makes. But Snape's lips are chapped and dry and soft against Harry's, and Harry's hands find Snape's hips, tug him closer and Snape groans.

Harry is already hard and this...*this is wrong*, but he desperately wants to find out every kind of noise Snape can make, wants to know what would happen if he took him by the hand and led him upstairs to his rooms.

"I'm—stop. We can't—"

Because no. He's not actually going to do this. He is Snape's professor. He's ten years older than him, and, once upon a time, their positions were reversed. This entire thing is messy and complicated, and Snape's been through enough. He's already broken and jagged and alone. And he deserves better. Doesn't he? Better than what Harry has to offer, at least.

"Right," Snape says pulling back. His lips are shiny with spit, and he frowns, hurt and anger flashing across his face. He doesn't say anything else but, as he stands, he takes Harry's hand in his, presses it briefly to his crotch, and Harry can feel the hard line of his erection through the fabric of his trousers.

"Severus..." Harry's voice catches on his name. He sounds desperate and overwhelmed and needy.

Snape's hand tightens around his once before letting go. He takes a long, shaky breath and turns away. But Snape doesn't head towards the Slytherin dorms. Instead, he walks in the direction of the boy's lavatory.

Harry doesn't think. If he did, he'd go straight to his rooms, pour himself a glass of Firewhisky, and go to bed. Or, maybe, he'd go to Minerva, confess everything, and throw himself on her mercy. After all, what he's done is reprehensible.

But Harry doesn't think. Instead he gets to his feet and follows Snape down the corridor to the restroom.

Harry's heart is pounding as he pushes the door open.

The room is dark at this hour, lit only by two flickering sconces on the wall. And, of course, it's

empty, save for the last stall. Harry hears the quiet gasp, the sudden intake of breath as the door shuts behind him. His shoes echo against the stone floor as he moves to lean against the washbasin.

Neither of them speaks.

But there's a rustle of fabric; he can picture the boy yanking his shirt from his trousers. And then there is a clank of metal as he undoes his belt, the sound of his zip as he hurriedly undoes his flies.

Harry leans against the sink; the cracked porcelain is cold against the palms of his hands. His knees are suddenly weak.

"*Fuck*," Harry hears the murmured curse, a whisper of sound that makes the blood pound in his ears. He has to close his eyes against the thought. But he can hear movement, the sound of skin on skin, and he knows Snape's hand is on his cock.

Harry bites his lip to keep from crying out as he listens to the sounds coming from behind the closed door. He doesn't think he's ever been this hard.

Snape's gasping now. Harry imagines how it would feel, warm against his cheek his neck, if he were in there now—Snape's forehead pressed against his as he stroked himself off. "*God...* This time, Harry realises that he's the one who's spoken out loud, and he can't help but press a hand against his prick.

Snape is close. Harry knows by the sound of a swallowed back moan, by the way his hand moves faster. Then he stills, and Harry swears he hears '*Professor*,' as Snape spends himself into the toilet.

Harry flees. He has to get the hell out of that restroom before he comes in his trousers, before he pushes that stall door open and takes Snape into his arms, does any of a dozen things that he absolutely cannot do.

The holidays are nearly here. And Harry has lessons to plan, marking to complete, and faculty meetings to attend. Which is good. Because it gives him less time to think about inappropriate infatuations. About if he's really going to let himself do all the things he wants to do to Severus Snape.

Harry manages to go an entire week without speaking to him.

Snape is watching him, though. His expression thoughtful, at times unreadable. Harry feels his eyes on him in class, in the Great Hall.

But Snape doesn't try to talk to Harry. He sits quietly in class, does his work, leaves promptly when Harry dismisses students.

And, while Snape is one of the handful of students who remains at the castle for winter hols, he stays in his rooms. Does not venture out after curfew—or, if he does, avoids Harry as Harry's been avoiding him. And does not appear at Harry's office door as Harry half hopes he will.

It's a week into winter term when Snape finally appears at Harry's office. He closes the door

behind him, casts a Muffliato, but does not step further into the room.

“So, what happened...” he says, in a careful sort of way, as if he’s not sure yet if they’re supposed to talk about it.

“Yeah?” Harry doesn’t look up from the essay he’s marking.

“Are we just acting like you didn’t listen to me jerk off in the bathroom? Or are you still pretending you don’t want me because—”

“Mr. Prince...” Harry rubs at his eyes, pushing his glasses up to his forehead. “I can’t. We can’t. Please.” His voice sounds strained. Glass about to crack.

“I’m eighteen. My birthday was on Wednesday.”

“That doesn’t matter.”

“Of course it does. Because you’re beating yourself up over wanting me. But I’m an adult and I’m telling you it’s all right. I want you too, and no one needs to know.”

“Severus... What I did was wrong. It was inexcusable and—”

“Stop,” Snape says, rolling his eyes. “Don’t be an idiot. If I’d wanted a private wank I would have gone back to my dorm and cast a silencing charm over my bed like a civilised wizard. I *wanted* you to follow me. You know that. I wanted you to listen. I wanted a lot more than that.”

Merlin, this conversation is already well out of Harry’s control—assuming he had any to begin with. He takes a deep breath. “Yeah?”

“You really are an idiot, aren’t you?” Snape says, but his expression, his voice is fond.

Harry swallows, his throat dry. It feels as though a warming charm has been cast in the room; he resists the urge to loosen his collar. He tries to tell himself it doesn’t matter—Severus is the same at eighteen as he was at seventeen. He is still his student. And he cannot...*should not* touch him. Still, he can’t silence the voice inside his head that says *at least now he is an adult*.

At least now it wouldn’t be a crime.

It’s absurd, of course. He is still in a position of power, of authority. And Snape... Snape has experienced a trauma. This is wrong. But he cannot deny that he wants him. He is getting used to the pervasive sense of guilt—wanting what he absolutely should not want, what no one in their right mind would condone.

Harry waves a hand, warding the door.

Snape comes around his desk but stops a few feet from him. “The way you look at me, *Christ*.” He flushes, twisting his hands together, but he doesn’t take his eyes off Harry. “Do you think about it? About me? Say yes.” Snape’s voice is thin; there’s a note of desperation there that fills Harry with guilt but also arousal. “Please say yes.”

Harry exhales, flattens his palms against his desk. “Yes. I think about it.”

“Tell me what you think about.”

“We’re not going to do this.”

“Why not?”

“Because I can’t,” he repeats.

“Then let me kiss you.”

No, Harry thinks. He should say no, but he can’t seem to form the word.

Snape steps closer. “Just let me kiss you.” He reaches out, slides his hand behind Harry’s neck; his fingers thread through his hair as he tilts his head up.

“Mr. Prince,” he manages finally. “Severus, what are we doing?”

“I think you know. And I think it’s been coming to this for a while now.”

It’s easy then, Snape’s mouth on his. The soft sound he makes as his lips part against Harry’s, his fingers tilting Harry’s head back. He should stop. He knows this—he really does. But he doesn’t want to. Instead, his hands grip Snape’s arms and he’s pulling him forward into his lap.

Snape’s teeth scrape his lip and Harry slips his tongue into his mouth. It’s awkward, with Snape half astride him. There isn’t really room for two in the chair, but it doesn’t matter because Harry’s hands find Snape’s hips and he’s pulling him even closer so his knees are on either side of Harry’s thighs. Harry tugs his shirt from his trousers, slides a hand up the boy’s spine. His skin is warm and smooth under Harry’s touch, and Snape moans into the kiss, shifts on his lap and, fuck, but Harry is already so hard he’s aching.

Snape pulls back gasping, eyes dark, pupils blown. His cheeks are flushed, lips pink and damp and trembling. And Harry doesn’t look down, doesn’t want to see the swell of his cock straining against his flies because just the thought is nearly too much.

“Is this okay?” Snape asks, rocking experimentally on Harry’s lap, his arse pressing against Harry’s prick, his own pressing against Harry’s stomach. “Because it feels really good.” He rocks again, slowly, tentatively and Harry arches up, pushing against him. He hasn’t come in his trousers in years, but it wouldn’t take much more of this.

“I wanked last night,” Snape says, breath warm against Harry’s cheek. “Thinking of you.” Harry’s stomach clenches; his skin feels too hot, too tight. He can hear the sounds Snape made that night in the restroom, and he desperately wants to know what Snape would look like, fingers curled around his cock. Harry takes a deep breath, pushes his hips against Snape again.

“Does that turn you on?”

“Yeah,” Harry says, breathless and wrecked. “You know it does.”

“I’d let you watch. If you wanted that. Or you could touch me.” Snape kisses him again, lips pressed to the corner of his mouth. “You could do whatever you wanted to me.”

“What do you want?” Harry asks. And he knows he’s crossing a line. He’s reached the point where he can no longer pretend they’re not doing this—can no longer pretend that this is all right. But he doesn’t care. He just wants his hands, his mouth on Snape. He wants to give him whatever it is he wants.

“Make me come.”

Harry pushes him up and towards his desk and Snape boosts himself up, leaning back on his

elbows to look down at Harry.

“Tell me if you want me to stop. I will,” Harry says, though it takes everything he has. His own prick is so hard it’s throbbing, and Snape is absolutely perfect.

“No,” Snape says. “Go on.”

Harry’s fingers brush his jaw and Snape turns his head into the touch. Opens his mouth against Harry’s knuckle.

Harry swallows. His throat is tight. He undoes Snape’s trousers, pulls them and his pants down just enough to get his cock out. It’s thick and flushed and fucking gorgeous. He’s already leaking. Harry swipes his thumb across the pink, slick curve of cockhead, smearing the fluid there.

“Careful,” Snape says, voice low, rough. “Or I’ll come before you even get your mouth on me.”

“Fuck.”

“We could do that too, you know. If you like.”

Harry doesn’t answer, because no. He can’t...he won’t. He puts one hand on Snape’s thigh, grips the base of his shaft, leaning over to take him in his mouth. Snape gasps, a breathy rush of sound, and his hips jerk up, but Harry swallows around him, tongue pressing against the hard line of his cock, as he sucks him in deeper.

“Oh my *god*, Professor...” Snape says and, Merlin, the way he *sounds*—voice thin and ragged and so fucking undone it’s nearly enough to push Harry over the edge. He’s got his knees splayed wide and both hands in Harry’s hair and it’s perfect, perfect... “Shit, I’m going to—” And then he’s shaking and gasping and coming in Harry’s mouth.

Snape collapses back on the desk’s surface. Harry’s essays are crumpled beneath him. The inkpot’s been overturned onto the floor, but it doesn’t matter. The boy’s breathing hard, chest rising and falling. He’s got one arm thrown over his face and he looks positively debauched. His skin is flushed, a blotchy pretty pink that spreads down his throat to his collar. His shirt is untucked, pushed up to his chest, and his trousers gape. Harry smooths his palms down the flat, pale expanse of his stomach. Snape shivers under his touch, and Harry nearly groans. Snape’s cock, damp and spent, is still half-hard, and Harry knows it wouldn’t take much to get him off again. The thought is nearly too much.

Harry has to stop himself from pressing a hand between his thighs, to thrust against his palm, to come into his trousers like a goddamned teenager.

He’s nearly there as is; it would be so easy.

Snape sits up, wincing a bit as he tucks himself back into his pants. “That was...” He shakes his head. “*Circe*, that was amazing. Didn’t know it could be like that.”

“Yeah?” Harry says, running a hand through his hair.

Snape just looks at him pointedly and then gestures to his lap. There’s no hiding how incredibly hard he is. “You going to let me help you with that?”

“No,” Harry manages, though he thinks it costs him something. “Not tonight.”

Snape scowls. “That turned you on, didn’t it? How much I want you, how fast you made me

come?”

Harry exhales. “Obviously.” He grimaces as he tries to adjust himself, but it doesn’t help.

“Then why won’t you let me touch you?”

Harry looks away. All he needs to do is lean back in his chair, part his legs and Snape would slip off the desk and get down on his knees. *God...* Harry wants to know what it would be like if he took him in his hand, stroked him off. Or maybe he’d put his mouth on him. Harry doesn’t think he’s done that before, wants desperately to be his first...

“You’re thinking about it, aren’t you?” Snape says. “What I’d do to you? How it would feel?”

Harry nods, throat dry, tight.

“Then let me. You know I want to.”

“I know, but I can’t. Not now. Not—”

“Not tonight,” Snape finishes for him. And Harry hears the frustration, the disappointment there. But, while he might have just sucked a student off on his desk, he can’t quite bring himself to allow that student to touch him. Not yet at least.

Fuck, this is going to end badly. But right now, Harry can’t find it in himself to care.

“Harry?” Minerva catches up to him on his way out of the Great Hall. “Do you have a moment?”

“Of course.”

They walk together through the corridors towards the Headmistress’s office, and Harry wonders what Minerva wants to speak with him about, and in private no less.

She gives the gargoyle the password and Harry follows her up the spiralling stairs.

“Biscuit?” Minerva asks, taking her seat at her desk. She pulls a package of Tim Tams from the drawer.

“No thanks,” Harry says. “I had pudding with dinner.”

She nods, taking a biscuit for herself.

“Is everything all right?”

“Yes, of course. I only wanted to talk about Severus.”

Oh. Of course.

Harry knows Minerva does not use Legilimency, but he wonders if he should put up a shield just in case. He takes a deep breath and affects what he hopes is a neutral expression.

They’ve been discreet. Besides, he’s hardly touched the boy. Just the kiss. And the bathroom. And, well, his office. But Minerva can’t know anything. “I think he’s doing well,” he says, when Minerva doesn’t offer anything more. “All things considered. His marks are excellent, but he’s brilliant, so I don’t suppose that’s much of a surprise.”

“No.” Minerva laughs, but her eyes are sad. “Severus has always been brilliant.”

“And he’s adjusting.”

“Yes. In this case, I suppose it’s for the best that Hogwarts, despite everything, hasn’t changed much over the years.”

It’s true. Hogwarts—and the Wizarding world in general—remains relatively isolated from the advances of the modern world. Certainly from the types of changes that would make the Muggle world of 2007 virtually unrecognisable to someone who’d just stepped out of the 1970s.

“And,” Harry continues slowly, “he’s not who he was then. Not anymore. Removing him from the...influences that encouraged his allegiance to Voldemort? Bringing him here? He’s more of who we now know he became than who he was just a few months ago in his timeframe.”

Minerva nods. “I am inclined to agree. But I want you to be careful, Harry. I don’t want your past relationship, your past feelings for Severus to cloud your judgement.”

“I’m sorry?” Harry must have misheard. “Past relationship?”

“Yes.”

“Are you suggesting that Professor Snape and I were, somehow, involved before?”

The shock must be clear on his face because Minerva frowns. “Weren’t you?”

“No.”

“But you— After his death, you knew what he had done. You knew how he was working for us all along. No one knew. Not his friends, his colleagues. But you did.”

“I didn’t know,” Harry says. “Not really. He played his role so well. He’d been helping me all along, but I didn’t know until the very end. And I couldn’t save him.” His voice breaks. Memories from that night, from the shack will always haunt him.

“And there was nothing more? You had his memories. And then your wish magic. You brought him back.” She looks down, uncomfortable. I’m sorry. I thought for sure that—

“That we were sleeping together?” Harry nearly laughs. “We...” He shakes his head. “No. I was seventeen. He was my professor.”

“And I would say the same thing about you and young Mr. Prince today,” Minerva follows, looking at Harry pointedly. “He is a student. And seventeen.”

“Eighteen,” Harry says without thinking.

Minerva raises an eyebrow. “Regardless, it only takes the hint of impropriety to get the governors involved, and with your reputation?”

Harry understands. The papers still love a good Saviour scandal.

“And Severus, as well,” Minerva continues. “I believe he is safe. No one suspects. But it is best to avoid undue attention.”

“Of course,” Harry says. He knows she’s right. And he knows he’s been selfish. Despite what Snape might think he wants, it is unfair and potentially dangerous to put him in a position where he

could be exposed to such public scrutiny. And, any scandal would negatively affect Minerva and Hogwarts as well, even if it didn't, ultimately, cost Harry his job.

But then again, Harry has spent the majority of his life doing what others have asked of him, what others expect. And part of him—albeit a foolish part—thinks maybe he deserves to be a little selfish now.

"I know you are close to the boy," Minerva says then gently. "And I did not mean to imply that you've behaved inappropriately. I merely want you to be careful, Harry. Severus, at that age, was...impressionable. I don't want him to get the wrong idea, or for you... Well, I just don't want to see you hurt, Harry."

"Hey," Harry says, sitting down beside Snape. He's careful to leave an appropriate distance between them.

"Hey." Snape doesn't look up from whatever it is he's working on. It's been a week since...that night in Harry's office.

Harry has agonised over it. That he's done something wrong—well, no, he *knows* he's done something wrong, but that he's upset Snape somehow. That he did something the boy didn't want to do. That he now regrets it.

"You all right?" Snape asks carefully. "Or are you still wallowing in guilt? Some sort of misguided notion that I didn't want you to touch me?"

...Or, maybe he's just been giving Harry space.

"Something like that."

Snape rolls his eyes. "And, if I told you *again* that I am an adult and I wouldn't do anything I didn't want? Would it make a difference?"

"Probably not."

"Right then." He looks back at his notebook.

"What are you doing?" Harry asks after a few moments when Snape hasn't looked over at him again.

"Clearly violating curfew."

"Yeah, well," Harry laughs. "Aside from that." Snape's sitting literally twenty meters down from the entrance to the Slytherin common room.

He shrugs. "Nothing important. Just spells."

"And you don't like working in your dorm?"

He shrugs again. "It's fine. People study. It's quiet enough but I—I like to be alone. And..." he finally looks up at Harry, "and maybe I was hoping to see you."

"You could have come to my office—for office hours, that is."

"I know. Didn't want to impose."

“You wouldn’t.” Harry doesn’t say that it’s likely for the best Snape hasn’t come, that he’s not sure he can trust himself around him. He motions to the notebook. “May I?”

Snape hands it to him. The pages are filled with spells. Some half-thought and fledgling, others fully rendered and precisely detailed. His knowledge of magical theory is astounding. Harry turns the page, scans Snape’s notes of various spell permutations and combinations, possible effects and counter-measures.

“This magic,” Harry asks, “have you tried it?” His own knowledge of spellwork is vast but he’s never considered some of the possibilities here.

“Some of it. The rest is just in my head.” Snape looks at Harry. He’s got his hair pulled back off his face; his eyes are dark, lovely. “It would work, though.”

Harry doesn’t doubt it.

“Don’t you write spells?” Snape asks, and Harry laughs.

“No. Haven’t a clue how, actually.”

Snape looks shocked. “You’re kidding.”

He shrugs. “I invent magic when necessary, and I can usually make it do what I want. But as far as writing spells down in a way others could use them? No, I’ve never gotten the hang of that. My magic doesn’t seem to work for others.”

“Of course it doesn’t.” Snape shakes his head. “You too bloody powerful.”

Harry hands the spellbook back. Snape closes his eyes and leans his head back against the wall.

“I can’t stop thinking about it, you know? How it felt. How you looked with your mouth on me.”

Harry swallows thickly. “Have you ever done that before?”

“Let one of my professors suck me off on his desk? No, can’t say I have.”

Harry laughs but it sounds strangled. “Not what I meant.”

“I know.” Then: “No.”

Harry nods. The thought that he was the first to do that to Snape is more arousing than it has any right to be.

Snape’s looking at him again. “You like that, don’t you? Knowing I’ve never had my cock in anyone else’s mouth?”

“Fuck...”

“Haven’t done that either,” Snape says. “Have you?”

“Yes.”

“Is it good?”

“Yeah. It can be.” He takes a deep breath. He’s half hard; he needs to go back to his rooms and

pour a glass of Firewhisky. Or take a cold shower. He stands.

“Wait,” Snape says, reaching out, taking Harry’s hand in his. His fingers are warm against his. “Stay a minute more.” Snape gets to his feet. He’s already an inch or two taller than Harry and he leans forward, presses his forehead to Harry’s. “Just kiss me.”

Harry does. It’s foolish. Perhaps more foolish than the myriad foolish things Harry has already done. After all, they are not warded in the confines of his office or alone in the boy’s loo, a stall door between them. It’s past curfew and the halls are empty, but they are still in the open. Someone could walk by, could see. Harry’s stomach twists at the thought but he doesn’t pull away. He opens his mouth against Snape’s, slides a hand down to the small of his back, slips his fingers just beneath the waistband of his trousers.

Harry will never get used to the sounds Snape makes, the feeling of his tongue in his mouth.

Snape pushes his hips against Harry, and he can feel the hard line of his cock.

He pulls back. “Stop.” He’s already breathing fast.

“Take me to your rooms, then.”

“No,” Harry says, but he doesn’t stop Snape when he kisses him again.

“Then just let me...” Snape says against his mouth, walking him two steps back against the wall. Harry groans, leans his head back, as Snape mouths a line of kisses down his throat. He sucks at Harry’s collarbone, teeth scraping against sensitive skin there. It will leave a mark, but he doesn’t care. The thought makes him shiver, makes him fist his hand in Snape’s shirt, tugging it from his trousers.

Snape’s moving his hips again. A slow, steady press of his prick against his. And *oh my god* Harry could get lost in it. Could let him rock against him until they’re both—

Fuck.

Harry puts his hands on Snape’s shoulders. Pushes him gently, stilling his movement. “Severus, please.”

Snape’s expression is mulish. “Why not?”

Because I am your teacher. Because it is wrong. Because I brought you here against your will, I am ten years older than you, and it’s no good...

“Because we’re in the hallway.”

Snape huffs but doesn’t object. “Then take me to your rooms.”

“No. Not tonight. You need to get back to your dorm.”

Snape glares. “And are we just ignoring the fact that I’m about to come.”

Harry laughs and looks down, rubbing his hand across the back of his neck and taking a step to the side, away from Snape. “I was trying to.”

Snape groans at the loss of touch and rolls his hips once more, thrusting them in a truly obscene manner. The movement only accentuates the swell of his prick beneath the fabric of his trousers.

Harry thinks he can see a small wet patch darkening the grey wool where his cock is pressed against it. "Fuck."

"I know, yeah?" Snape steps closer again, curls a hand around the back of Harry's head to suck at a spot on his neck just above his collarbone. Harry exhales. He's so close to giving in, to allowing Snape to rut against him until they're both coming in their pants. He places a hand on Snape's chest and pushes him away. "You know we can't. Not here. Not now. Go back to your dorm. It's late."

"Oh come on, *Professor*," Snape practically whines. The word sounds filthy on his tongue and it makes Harry shiver. "I can't go back like this. Showing up after curfew with a hard on? People will notice."

"You'll be fine," Harry tries, eyes drawn to the line of the boy's cock; it's clearly visible, straining against his zip. *Merlin*, Snape's right. It wouldn't take long for him to stroke him off right here in the hallway.

"I doubt it," Snape says and he's standing too close again. His breath is warm against Harry's cheek. "I'll have to stop in the loo. Take care of it." Snape reaches down, presses his palm to his erection, groaning softly as he moves his hand up and down. Once. Twice. "Unless..."

Unless... Christ. Harry closes his eyes, exhales shakily. That's it. He's going to hell. He opens his eyes again and moves in front of Snape, reaching out to press his hands to the wall on either side. "Go on then."

"Yeah?" Snape's eyes go wide but he doesn't stop moving his hand. "Talk to me. Tell me what you want me to do. What you want to do to me."

Harry's breath catches, and Snape smiles.

"How you'd like to touch me. I know you want to." He presses his palm down against his cock once more before clenching his fingers around the base, squeezing tightly over the fabric of his trousers.

"You want to hear how I'd suck you off again?" Harry says, leaning closer to whisper in his ear. His voice is ragged, stretched thin with want. "How I'd drop to my knees right here."

Snape's hips jerk forward and he moans. The sound is loud and obscene in the quiet. "Yeah?"

"You have to know how much I want you," Harry says, mouth against Snape's temple, his hair. "I can't stop thinking about it. You make me ache..."

It's only another moment before he's shaking, breath warm and ragged against Harry's neck, and Harry knows he's coming. Snape slumps back against the wall, eyes closed, chest rising and falling rapidly. Harry can't help himself. He slides a hand down his stomach to press his palm against the front of his trousers, against his softening prick. He strokes his thumb up and down, feeling the wetness spreading there.

Snape hisses, covers Harry's hand with his own. "Let me touch you now."

But Harry is already stepping back. With a murmured incantation, Snape's trousers are dry, clean. "No. Sometime, but not tonight."

Snape frowns, but pushes himself away from the wall. He presses a quick kiss to Harry's cheek. "See you in class, Professor."

Then he disappears down the hallway to his dorm.

Harry doesn't heal the mark left from Snape's mouth, his teeth. It's hidden well enough beneath his collar and Harry *likes* it.

Circe. He must be losing his damned mind.

He's distracted, mind continually wandering from his students, his teaching to the feel of Snape's lips, his skin against his, and—*oh my god*—the sounds he made, muffled and desperate and positively filthy as he got himself off right there in the corridor for Harry.

He takes a deep breath.

Luckily, his second and third years are working on minor healing spells. And even when those go wrong—which they do—it's nearly impossible for any real harm to come from it. His fifth years are completing their essays on the classifications of Unforgivables and their use during the war. And his seventh years...his seventh years are working on detection spells. Which is good because Harry can do those in his sleep—literally—and he can hardly think, can't keep his mind organised because he can *feel* Snape watching him.

Harry thinks, surely, if anyone saw him they would have to know, wouldn't they? If they saw the way Snape's eyes follow him, heated and curious and so damned obvious Harry is sure he's going to give everything away. But no one seems to see notice and the period passes without incident.

Harry answers questions. Offers guidance or correction as needed. And manages to assign the day's reading. Then students are packing up and filing out the classroom and only Snape is left, sitting at his desk, making a few last notes in his text.

The door shuts and they're alone.

Snape puts his book in his bag and stands, walks over to where Harry is leaning against his desk. "You didn't heal it," he says, softly, fingers tugging gently at Harry's collar; he pulls it back, exposes the mark Harry knows is there.

"No."

"Why?"

"I like it."

Snape's fingers slip beneath the fabric of Harry's shirt, press against the bruise. Harry shudders at the sensation.

"Do you have any idea what that does to me?" His voice is low, rough. "Sitting here in class, the mark *I* made damned near visible there on your neck?" He takes a deep breath and steps back. He's still standing too close; Harry can feel the warmth from his body, the spark of his magic against his skin, but it's enough to pass as appropriate were someone to walk in. "I can't be the only one who

noticed, either,” he says, eyes still fixed on Harry’s throat. “Whenever you turned to the side or dropped your arm to cast.” He shakes his head. “Fuck, Professor, it’s hardly fair what you do to me.”

Harry exhales. He knows Snape notices how shaky his breath is by the quirk of his mouth. “Then, perhaps next time, don’t mark me up.”

“Next time?”

“Yeah.”

“You’ve fallen for me.”

Harry looks up from the essay he’s marking. “Have I now?”

They’re in the library. Harry holds office hours here once or twice a week so students who are revising can drop by his table to ask questions. It also now serves the added purpose of keeping Snape out of his office because, apparently, Harry can’t help himself when they’re alone together.

“Well, you’ve had my cock in your mouth. It’s a reasonable assumption.”

Fuck. Harry casts a quick Muffliato. The library is quiet tonight, but it wouldn’t do to be overheard.

Snape smiles. “You do know how much I like it when you use my spells, yeah?”

Harry nods. He flips over the parchment he’s marking, though he hasn’t really read the first page.

“So, you’ve fallen for me.”

“Maybe I just like sucking cock.”

“Perhaps. You were quite good at it, I suppose.”

Harry laughs. “So one ‘quite good’ blowjob and you think I’ve fallen for you?” He makes a note in the margin of the essay.

“Yes, that. And you think about me when you wank.”

Harry looks up; he suddenly feels too warm.

“I knew it.”

Snape is sitting at the far end of the table. He’s got his Defence textbook open. There is absolutely nothing untoward about sharing a table in the library with a student. Harry’s done it a hundred times before. But just a few words out of Snape’s mouth and Harry wants to pull him into his lap and kiss him breathless. Or get down on his knees and suck him off beneath the table.

He takes a deep breath.

“Do you think about it? I didn’t last long, did I? That time in your office. I was embarrassed at first, but I know you liked it.”

Harry nods. He doesn’t trust himself to speak.

“I’ve wanked at least a dozen times thinking about the way that felt,” he continues, “how you let me fuck your mouth.”

“If you’re trying to make me hard right now,” Harry says under his breath, “it’s working.”

“Yeah?” Snape’s cheeks are pink. Harry wonders how far the flush would spread down his throat, his chest if he had him naked in his bed.

Harry looks down at the essay he’s supposed to be marking. What the hell’s wrong with him?

The boy stands. He’s hard too. Harry watches as he slips his hands into his pockets to hide the way his erection is tenting his school trousers.

Harry closes his eyes. He’s going to get himself sacked.

Snape comes down to Harry’s end of the table, and leans over to open the Defence book Harry’s got there. His arm brushes against Harry’s and he takes a bit longer than necessary to find the page he’s looking for. Then he straightens up, standing to Harry’s side; his hands are back in his pockets again.

“What are you doing?” Harry asks softly.

“Asking you a question, of course. So, in theory, you should be able to layer dampening spells with your offensive casting to weaken your opponent’s magic, correct?” His voice carries a tad too loudly, but it doesn’t matter. The Muffliato’s still up. “But I can’t seem to figure out how to keep it from affecting my own spells as well.”

Snape isn’t looking at the textbook. Rather, he’s staring down at Harry’s lap.

Harry shifts in his chair, spreading his legs just enough for Snape to see the bulge of his prick where it’s pressed against his flies.

The boy exhales sharply.

“Think of your spell sets,” Harry manages, his voice strained. “Offensive and defensive spells repel. As long as you can cast simultaneously, it shouldn’t be a problem.”

“All right,” he says, and Harry nods, lifting his hips ever so slightly.

“Fuck.” Snape swears under his breath. “That’s really hot.”

Harry laughs. He should be embarrassed, or ashamed, but he’s so turned on he can’t think straight, and his cock is aching and Snape is standing too close.

Harry looks around, but there’s no one nearby. Irma’s at the circulation desk on the opposite end of the library, and there are no students about. He lets his hand fall down into his lap, cupping his erection. Merlin, he’s so bloody hard, and he can feel himself leaking already. If he’s not careful he’ll have a goddamned wet patch on the front of his trousers.

He hears Snape swallow thickly. “Oh,” he murmurs.

Harry drags his thumb down the hard line of his prick and has to bite the inside of his cheek to keep from moaning aloud.

“Do it,” Snape says, his voice barely a rasp. “Touch yourself. I want to watch you.”

Slowly, Harry strokes himself, tightening his fingers around his cock, pushing the fabric of his trousers back and forth as he slides his hand down the length of his shaft and then up again. He presses his palm to the head of his prick, feeling more wetness welling there.

“No one’s looking,” Snape says softly. “There’s no one even around. Do you think if I touched you, you’d come in your pants? I’d like to see that, you know. See you come apart, make a mess of yourself here where anyone could walk by and see.”

“Keep talking,” Harry says. “And you won’t even need to touch me. I’ve always liked your voice.”

“*Oh my god.*”

Snape is touching himself now. Harry sees his hand moving in his pocket, rubbing up and down. “I’d let you fuck me, you know, if you wanted that.”

“Would you fuck me?” Harry asks, breathless, fingers clenching around his cock. God, he’s close.

And he’s going to hell. Or Azkaban.

Snape gasps. “You do that? You like it?”

“Yeah,” Harry says, moving his hand faster. “I like it a lot.”

“Fuck. I’m going to— that’s...” Snape is breathing hard beside him, and Harry turns his head, sees him shuddering. Knows he’s trying to be still, to be quiet; and he’s failing. It’s almost enough to send Harry over the edge. “Professor—shit—I’m...” He cries out softly as he comes. Harry can see the wetness staining the front of his trousers.

Harry’s not actually going to do this. He’s not going to come in his pants in the goddamned library because he watched a student get himself off—because he *encouraged* that student to get himself off. But Snape is still trembling beside him and it’s too much.

“That’s the hottest thing I think I’ve ever seen,” Harry says, twisting his wrist, clenching his fingers around his cock. He’s so close. He’s not sure he could stop himself now even if he wanted to.

“Yeah?” Snape says. He sounds positively wrecked. “Prove it. Make yourself come, too.”

Harry hears voices across the stacks, knows the remaining students are putting their work away and heading back to their dorms for the evening, but Snape is still whispering filthy things in his ear and, fuck, *fuck*. The orgasm is easy. Harry only has to exhale and press his palm down against his cock once more and he comes harder than he’s come in a very long time, his body shaking as spunk coats the inside of his y-fronts and seeps at the seam against his thigh.

Snape is still looking down at him, cheeks flushed, pupils blown. He looks obscene. He looks gorgeous.

“Shit. Did you just?”

Harry nods. “Yeah.” His heart is pounding in his ears and he shifts, pants sticking to his skin uncomfortably. He waves a hand, wincing at the cleaning charm, but it does the trick. Another quick spell and the wetness darkening the front of Snape’s trousers vanishes too. Harry leans forward, resting his elbows on the table and rubs at his eyes, pushing his glasses up to his forehead.

“That was inappropriate,” he finally says, and Snape snorts.

“You don’t say.” But he’s looking at Harry with something like affection and it twists like nausea in his gut.

“You said you wanted me to fuck you.” Harry feels Snape’s hand brush against his shirt, but then he’s stepping away, back to the other end of the table to collect his things.

“We can’t,” Harry says softly. “I won’t.”

“I know,” Snape says, slinging his bag over his shoulder. “But did you mean it? Would you like that?”

Harry swallows. His body is still tingling from the aftershocks of his orgasm. “Yes.”

Snape nods. “Good.” Then he turns, disappearing around the nearest aisle and leaving Harry alone with his unmarked essays.

A week passes, and then another. Harry plans lessons and teaches classes. He runs. Hermione and Rose Floo for dinner. And Harry walks to Hogsmeade with Hagrid and Filius to have a drink at the Hog’s Head.

Minerva does not appear at Harry’s door saying he’s being brought before the Board of Governors for indecent behaviour with a student.

Harry avoids the dungeons when he patrols the corridors at night, and Snape does not come to his office or seek him out in the library.

But Harry is tired. Tired of trying to pretend he doesn’t care, that he doesn’t want Severus Snape more than he’s ever wanted anything. He still hasn’t quite come to terms with that—with *how* much he wants. But it’s not going away. If anything, it’s getting stronger. And it’s all he’s been able to think about. The way Snape feels pressed against him. The size and shape of his cock in Harry’s mouth. The sounds he makes when he comes. Harry’s wanked himself raw, sprawled across his bed, arching up into his own hand, remembering the feel of Snape’s prick against his hand.

“I’m tired of wanting you,” Harry says.

“You can have me.”

“I know.”

They’re atop the Astronomy Tower. Harry had known he’d find Snape here. He can sense him throughout the castle. Can feel his magic, stronger now than even before.

It’s not a bond. Not really. Not in a traditional sense, at least. There is no compulsion, no necessity. But they are connected by powerful magic. Magic strong enough to bring Severus Snape across time and space. So it’s not surprising that it can also bring Harry through the corridors and up the steep tower steps.

“Do you want to go to bed with me?”

“Yes.”

They’ve been coming to this for weeks and weeks. It’s almost a relief to finally give in.

The castle is quiet, dark as they walk through the hall to Harry’s room. It’s well after curfew; no one is out. “Will you be missed?” Harry asks as he places his palm against his door, feels the wards fall away under his touch.

“No,” Severus says. “I put a charm on my bed.”

“Good.” Harry doesn’t bother with the light. He walks through the small sitting room to the hallway that leads back to his bedroom. Severus follows. “Is this—are you sure?” Harry asks, turning around. The bed is unmade. The fire burns low in the grate, casts warm shadows across the floor.

“Yes,” he says simply. And Harry nods.

Severus steps close to him, close enough to curl his hands around Harry’s biceps, hold him still. He looks at Harry for a long moment then runs his hand down Harry’s chest. “May I?”

“Yes.”

He unbuttons Harry’s shirt, pushes it off his shoulders to the floor. Then he holds his hand out, tentatively, as though he’s still not sure he can actually touch him.

Harry feels exposed, on display. Severus’s skin is pale and smooth. His is covered with a lifetime of scars.

“You’re gorgeous,” Severus breathes, pressing a kiss to Harry’s shoulder. He traces a finger along the puckered scars that curve around Harry’s ribcage. “What happened?”

“Crucio,” Harry says and Severus’s touch feels good. As though Harry has nothing to be ashamed of, as though his past—the marks it left on him—is not the dark stain Harry always worries it is. “During the war.”

“And here?” Severus’s palm skids across the flat of Harry’s stomach.

“A cutting hex. Duel.”

“This one?” His hand comes up to Harry’s shoulder, fingers tracing the thick, ropy scar there.

“A basilisk.”

Severus looks up, eyes wide. “A what now?”

Harry laughs. “A basilisk. I killed one my second year.”

He takes a step back. “You killed a basilisk? When you were twelve?”

“Well,” Harry says, fingering the scar. “It nearly killed me, too.”

“Basilisk fangs are deadly.” Severus is looking at him with disbelief. “How are you alive? And where the fuck did you find a basilisk?”

“The castle. It’d been hiding in the pipes for years. Since Riddle was a student, actually.”

“Years... So you killed a *mature* basilisk when you were twelve?”

“I had help. Dumbledore’s phoenix clawed out its eyes, so I could look at it and, then, when I’d been poisoned, he healed me.”

“Of course.” Severus is shaking his head. “Your life is absurd. You do realise that, don’t you?”

“Sometimes.”

Severus leans forward, slides his tongue over the sensitive slippery smooth skin there on his shoulder. And Harry shivers while his fingers continue to run over Harry’s torso, his stomach. A jagged scar from a cutting hex crosses his hip, disappears beneath the waistband of his jeans. Another wraps around his forearm, the remnant of an Incarcerous from his brief time as an Auror. “And this?” Severus says, after a moment. He presses his palm flat to the centre of Harry’s chest, and Harry exhales.

“Avada Kedavra.”

Severus kisses him then, eager and wanting, and Harry walks him backward until his thighs hit his bed. He sits back, as Severus hovers over him. Harry reaches out, runs his fingers down the smooth, unscarred skin of his throat. Severus shivers, catches Harry’s hand in his.

“I was there, you know,” Harry says voice barely a whisper. “The night you died.”

“You brought me back.”

“Yes.”

Harry toes off his trainers then as Severus bends to undo the laces of his shoes. Then Harry lies back against the pillows, tugs Severus down on top of him. He spreads his legs, lets him settle between them.

He kisses Severus’s forehead and tries not to think about anything, save for the press of Severus’s hips against his, the feel of his hands on his skin.

Severus’s prick is hot and swollen through his trousers as he starts to move, slowly at first, watching Harry’s face as though he might see something there—some reservation or doubt. Some regret. But Harry just kisses him again, whispers *yes* against his lips, and lifts his hips, as his hands smooth down the boy’s back, hold him close to him.

When Severus reaches between them to tug at his belt, Harry’s breath catches. Nothing about their relationship is appropriate—it hasn’t been for quite some time. *Since he wished him here, really, if Harry is being honest...* But this...this is something more.

Severus pauses, eyes dark, brow furrowed. “You okay?”

Harry nods, moves his hands on top of Severus’s. Together they undo his flies.

When Severus’s hand curls around his cock for the first time, Harry has to bite his lip to keep from crying out, to keep from coming on the spot.

“Oh my *god*,” Severus says, head pressed to Harry’s shoulder as he begins to slide his hand up and down. His palm is warm and dry and perfect, and Harry clutches at Severus’s hips and arches up against him. “Do you know how long I’ve wanted to touch you?” he gasps, “because *fuck* this is...”

“You’re...” *perfect...mine...going to make me come...* “wearing too many clothes,” Harry manages, and Severus laughs.

“Yeah?”

“Do you want to fuck me?” Harry asks. “Because we don’t have to. We don’t have to do anything. This is enough—”

But Severus kisses him, cutting him off, and sits up to tug his shirt over his head. “I’ve wanted to fuck you for weeks.”

Harry’s hands feel clumsy and awkward, but somehow he manages to get Severus’s trousers undone, pushed down his hips, his thighs. He’s wearing grey cotton y-fronts, and there’s a damp spot darkening them where his erection is pressed against the fabric. Harry has to close his eyes and take a steadying breath or he’s going to come all over himself before they’ve even begun.

“Yes?” Severus says, and Harry nods.

Severus pulls his trousers and pants down the rest of the way, and Harry strips off his jeans and shifts, reaching to his bedside cabinet for the lube he’s stashed there. “You’ve got to get me ready. If you’re sure.”

Severus nods, eyes wide as he takes the small phial Harry hands him. “I’m sure.”

Harry watches as Severus opens the stopper with shaking fingers.

He ends up with his legs spread, Severus kneeling between them. “You have to tell me what to do,” he says, voice soft, unsure. And Harry remembers that he’s never done this before. The thought makes his cock twitch, his pulse quicken.

“Slick your fingers,” he says. “Stretch me open.”

Severus places his palm on Harry’s thigh, then slides one slippery finger down the crease of his arse. Harry shivers, watches the look on Severus’s face.

It’s always a little strange at first, a little foreign, and Severus isn’t quite sure what to do. But Harry lifts his hips, and the noise Severus makes as he watches his finger slip into Harry’s arse is maybe the hottest thing Harry has ever heard.

Severus swallows, the muscles in his throat, his jaw working as he slides his finger out and in again.

“Another,” Harry says, spreading his legs a little more and Severus just grunts out a little breath and pushes a second finger in beside the first. “Yeah, like that.” Harry fists a hand in the sheets and rocks his hips into the press and slide of Severus’s fingers. “Now spread them wider.”

“*Oh god...*” Severus whispers. His cock is already so hard, jutting straight up against his belly, the head wet and sticky, and Harry wonders how easy it would be to get him off right now before he’s even inside him.

Harry shifts, pushing back against the press of fingers and Severus lets out another shuddery breath.

“You’re so tight,” he says, voice thick with wonder, with arousal, and Harry can’t help but clench around him just a little.

“Yeah, well, it’s been a while,” Harry says, clenching again.

“Fuck,” Severus says, and the word sounds as if it were punched out of him. Harry sees that he’s shaking, stomach muscles tense, and tight. He’s close. Harry knows he’s close, and that thought is so damned erotic.

“Just think of what it will feel like,” Harry curls his fingers around his own cock loosely, strokes himself. “I’ve been going crazy thinking about it. Wanting you.”

“Shit—I’m...” Severus grabs his cock in his free hand, gripping it tightly, but it’s too late. He squeezes his eyes shut and Harry sees him start to come, spilling over his fingers and onto the sheets. “Oh my god, I can’t believe I just did that.” He slips his fingers from Harry’s arse, flops down beside him. “Fuck. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be,” Harry says, mouth against his temple. “Just means you’ll last longer inside me.”

Severus moans.

Harry turns towards him, cups his face in his hands and kisses him, soft and slow until Severus’s mouth opens against his. Then Harry reaches down between them. Slides his fingers through the come smeared across Severus’s stomach, his half-hard cock.

Severus hisses but rocks against him.

“See?” Harry says, smiling against his lips. “Now finish getting me ready.”

It doesn’t take long for Severus to be fully hard again. He’s three fingers deep and gasping, and Harry needs him to fuck him *now*. “You good?” he manages, breath catching as Severus’s thumb strokes the sensitive skin between his bollocks and his hole.

“Yeah.” He twists his wrist and Harry has to bite the inside of his cheek to keep from crying out.

“Then slick yourself. I’m ready.”

“Fuck,” Severus says, sitting back on his knees. He’s shaking as he pours more oil on his hand, rubs it over his prick. “You have to tell me—how do you want to do this?”

Harry pulls a pillow beneath his hips. “Like this. I want to look at you.”

“Yeah?”

Harry nods.

Severus’s hair swings forward as he lines himself up and begins to press in. Harry reaches out, brushes it back from his face. He runs his fingers down the slender column of his neck, feels Severus’s pulse flutter beneath his fingertips. Severus exhales, eyes falling shut.

It’s a bit uncomfortable at first and awkward. Severus doesn’t know where to put his hands, or whether to brace himself on his arms. But Harry smooths a hand over his hip, and Severus makes a low noise as he sinks in deeper.

“Yes, yes,” Harry says, pulling Severus towards him, groaning when he slides all the way in, his hips hitting his arse. “That’s it.”

Harry can feel him trembling above him, can feel the tension in his body, the flex of his fingers on his waist.

“Okay?” Harry shifts beneath him, spreading his thighs as he adjusts to the blunt press of Severus’s cock inside him. The boy’s head is pressed to his chest, and he’s breathing hard. Harry cards his fingers through his hair.

“Yeah,” Severus manages. “Yeah. Just give me a second.” Harry relaxes beneath him, slides a hand up and down his spine and waits.

“God,” Severus says, pressing a kiss to Harry’s collarbone before pulling back and thrusting in again. “This is... you’re amazing.”

Harry breathes out. “It’s good,” he says. “So good.”

“Yeah.” Severus is staring down between them to where they’re joined. He watches as he pulls out, pushes in again slowly. Harry grips his hip with one hand, shifts into the movement. Severus pushes in again, harder now, before curving an arm beneath Harry’s back to pull him even closer. He thrusts in smooth, short motions, skin slick and warm against Harry’s.

It’s exquisite and perfect in a way that’s sharp and overwhelming.

“*More.*” Harry’s cock is throbbing, swollen and hard and pressed between their stomachs. He slips a hand down to stroke himself as they move together.

Severus’s breath catches, and he thrusts harder into him. He’s still looking down at Harry, and Harry can’t think of anything except the way it feels between them, the way his body arches and shudders against Severus’s. For months, everything has been coming to this moment, and now—now he’s overcome with the thrill of it.

Severus leans forward, drags his teeth down the curve of Harry’s neck, sucks at the hollow of Harry’s throat in a way that’s so intimate it makes him shudder. And then he feels it, the traces of Severus on his consciousness, his neuromancy leaking out in the rush of what they’re doing. But Harry lets him in, opens his mind to let Severus feel his happiness, his pleasure, his want. And Severus cries out, presses his mouth to Harry in a rough kiss, and Harry pushes up into his thrusts, the bed shaking beneath them.

“I’m...I’m close,” Harry says, pleasure building, his whole body feels tight, on fire as he tugs at his prick. “Fuck, don’t stop,” he cries out, stomach taut and tense, a shudder going through him deep and hard as he comes, warm spurts of spunk spattering across his belly, smearing over Severus’s with his next quick thrust.

Severus’s eyes are open, dazed as he stares down at him, hips slowing.

“No,” Harry says. “Don’t stop.” He clutches at his shoulders, draws in a shaking breath. “Come. I want you to come in me.” Harry feels shivery and loose. He can hear his heart pounding as Severus starts to move again, lifting up to brace himself on his forearms as he fucks Harry harder, his rhythm broken, fragmented, but good—so good.

“Severus...”

He shudders when he comes. And Harry can *feel* it, the rush of warmth, the pulsing of his cock deep inside him.

“Oh my god,” Severus breathes out, forehead pressed to Harry’s chest; he’s breathing hard and Harry feels sweaty and achy and absolutely brilliant.

He slides out gently, settling beside Harry. Harry stretches his legs out; he’s going to be sore

tomorrow. They lie there together for a long time, sticky and sated. Harry finally manages a cleaning charm, but it's only half-effective. Severus laughs, touching a hand to his stomach. They're still tacky, sweaty. The bed smells of sex and come.

"Yeah, well," Harry sighs, "if you can do better, by all means, go for it."

But Severus only snuggles closer to Harry's side. "No. I don't think I could do magic now if I tried."

Harry feels oddly fragile, as though he's balanced on some huge precipice. Things could go horribly wrong. He knows this, but he also knows he doesn't care, not with Severus warm against Harry's side, his nose pressed to Harry's ear, breathing there. *Worth it...*

"I'll need to go back to my dorm, won't I?"

"Yes." Harry shifts, turning on his side to look at him. In the dim moonlit room, the boy looks beautiful. His pale skin flushed with exertion, his dark hair damp with sweat. Harry reaches out to brush a finger down his cheek. "But not now. You can stay a while."

It's not wise. The longer he's away from his bed, the greater the likelihood he'll be missed, the more chance they'll be caught. But he's already taken too much, allowed himself this. What's a few hours more? "I'll set an alarm. Let's get some sleep."

It's nice here, with Severus in his bed. And Harry knows, if he's not careful, he could get used to it.

The following morning, Harry takes a hot shower, then stares in the mirror for a long time. He thinks, perhaps, he should look different now. Now that everything has changed. But, aside from the bruises Severus kissed onto his chest, the marks on his throat, the one just below his jaw, he looks absolutely the same.

He heals the bruises visible on his neck, but leaves the others, before putting on his teaching robes and heading down to breakfast.

He half expects people to stare. For people to know. But Minerva is engaged in a conversation with Aurora, and Pomona only smiles up at Harry over her cup of tea.

Prophet? Filius asks, folding his paper as Harry takes the seat beside him.

"No thanks," he says, reaching for the coffee. His eyes scan the student tables; he's careful to look at each one in turn before Slytherin.

He isn't there, and Harry is hit with a sudden pang of worry—that he's upset, or that he's uncomfortable coming the Great Hall after what happened, what they did.

But then the doors open and another group of students spills in. Severus is among them, flanked by two Slytherin girls. They're talking over him, clearly vying for his attention and he nods absently, but he's looking towards the Head Table and his eyes find Harry's.

He doesn't smile—that would be too obvious, too reckless—but something crosses his expression that slips like warmth down Harry's spine to tighten in his stomach. Severus holds his gaze for a fraction of a second before looking away again, turning his attention back to whatever his yearmates are discussing. Harry's throat is dry. He takes a sip of his coffee and reaches for a scone.

They're the savoury kind he likes with the cheese and little bits of onion, but he can't taste a thing.

"Hey." Snape sits down a few feet from Harry.

It's lunchtime. It's been a week since the last time he was alone with Snape—with *Severus* his mind, of late, has been supplying. Harry's outside on the sloped lawn adjacent to the Quidditch pitch. The Gryffindor Chasers are running some scoring drills. Harry watches as Ligeia Johnson zips overhead. She gets the Keeper out of position with an impressive feint, but her shot sails wide right.

"Is this all right?" Severus asks carefully, and Harry nods. The lawn is clearly visible from the castle and there is nothing inappropriate about a student sitting outside with a professor.

Harry takes a bite of his sandwich. Severus's got an apple in his hand, but he's not eating it.

"McGonagall's meeting with seventh years this week. She wants to know our plans for next year."

"Get your mastery. I have it on good authority you'll make an excellent Potions teacher here one day."

He laughs. "Yeah, you might have mentioned that once or twice. Though I'm not entirely sure I believe you. You hated Potions, after all."

"I might have done," Harry says with a grin. "But that doesn't mean you weren't damned good at your job."

Severus takes a bite of apple, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. "Are we okay?" he asks after a moment, and the uncertainty, the desperation Harry hears in his voice makes his chest ache.

"Yeah," he says, voice thick. Yeah, I think we are."

"Good."

Lunch is nearly over. The Quidditch players are down; Harry sees them putting their equipment away in the storage shed.

"I'm glad it wasn't Regulus."

"I'm sorry?"

"I'm glad you didn't sleep with Regulus Black." Harry feels petty saying the words out loud. But it's true, and he wants him to know.

Severus only chuckles. "If I didn't know better, Professor Potter, I'd think you were jealous. Silly, you know, considering he's been dead for thirty years."

"I'm not jealous. Not really." Harry shrugs. "It's just..."

"It's just you like that it's you."

They sit there for a while longer. Harry should go back inside, get ready for his afternoon classes, but he likes it here.

After a few minutes, Severus says: "Can I come by your rooms tonight?"

“Yes.”

He nods and stands, slipping his hands into his pockets before heading back towards the castle.

It's late. Severus waited until well after curfew before coming up from the dungeons. Harry can feel the press of his magic before he's even to his rooms. The hallway appears empty when he opens the door, but Severus brushes against him as he slips inside. The door shuts behind him and he lets his disillusionment charm fall.

“Impressive,” Harry says. “You're getting better.”

He shrugs. “The concealment is good, but until I can figure out how to cloak my magic I'm still detectable.”

“True,” Harry says, pulling him into his arms. “But remember, most wizards can't tell one magical signature from another, let alone detect you under that disillusionment spell.”

Severus leans in, lets Harry press a kiss to his temple, his forehead. “Most wizards can't even distinguish their own magical signature from a Hinkypunk or a house-elf.”

Harry laughs, kisses Severus's mouth. “No.”

“Can we have a drink?” he asks.

“I'm fairly sure I'm not supposed to give you alcohol.”

“Probably not supposed to let me stick my cock in your arse either, but you know how that goes.”

He smiles, kisses him again. “Likely not. Firewhisky's in the cupboard. That's all I've got.”

“Figured as much.” Harry watches as Severus walks to the small kitchenette. He takes two glasses and pours splash of whisky in each. Hands one to Harry and sips at his.

Harry watches a plume of smoke rise from his glass before swallowing it down. It burns his throat, his chest pleasantly. He takes Severus's empty glass from him and sets them both on the counter. “Now come to bed with me?”

“Why do you think I came all this way?”

“For my alcohol and scintillating conversation?”

He grins. “No, not especially.”

Harry brings a hand to his chest, feigns insult, but Severus grabs his hand, leads him down the hall to his bedroom.

Harry rests his head against Severus's chest, sighing when Severus cards his fingers through his hair. Harry likes being petted, likes the casual intimacy they have here, tucked away in his rooms, out of sight, away from prying eyes, where Harry can pretend that what they have is normal. That what they're doing isn't in clear violation of at least half a dozen rules and sure to get him dragged before the Board of Governors and then, most likely sacked.

But then, he knows it's also something...*more*. The wish magic has had unforeseen consequences. To be honest, he anticipated as much. After all, the magic was unprecedented and unprecedented magic has unprecedented effects. That he would now be so...attached to the Severus Snape he wished into his time is not all that surprising.

He has not told Hermione. To tell her would be to admit that he has fallen for him. And—even if he does not reveal their...relationship, because that's what this is, after all—she would know. She's too perceptive, too understanding to not realise that something is going on.

"I still think about it, you know," Severus says softly. "My past, the way my life was... then. The things I thought I wanted. The things I thought were right."

Harry hmms. He knows there are things they should probably talk about, things they shouldn't ignore, but it's easy here—ensconced behind the curtains of his bed in his towered room—to ignore everything except the way it feels when they are together.

"The details are fading some, though," Severus continues, "and sometimes I find myself forgetting that this... that this isn't the life I began. It's not the life I was meant to have."

"Maybe it was," Harry says, turning his head to press a kiss to Severus's shoulder. "My magic brought you here for a reason. And I think it meant us to be happy. We deserve that, at least."

Harry gives students the last fifteen minutes of class to get started on their reading while he sits down to go over his notes.

That's when he feels it, the press of the boy's magic. Subtle at first, but deliberate. He checks to see that his Occlumency shield is in place before glancing up. Severus is leaning back in his chair, arms folded across his chest, and then... Another wash of magic; an image is forced into his field of vision. Harry is at his desk. Severus is on his knees beneath him, sucking Harry into his mouth and... *Holy shit*.

"Mr. Prince," he says, too loudly, but his pulse is racing and thank Merlin for the full coverage of teaching robes. "Is there a reason you're not using this time to work like the rest of your classmates? Is the reading not up to your standards?"

Severus's dark eyes are fixed on Harry's. His expression gives nothing away. "Sorry, sir. I was distracted."

At the end of class, Harry asks him to stay. Severus merely nods, slipping his book into his bag and sitting back in his chair as though he wasn't sending Harry pornographic images just minutes before.

"What was that?"

"Did you like it?"

Harry feels his cheeks warm. He rubs a hand across the back of his neck. "I'm not going to answer that."

Severus grins. "Thought so."

"What did you do?" Harry asks. "Because that wasn't Legilimency. The press of your magic felt the same at first, but I had my shields up and," he pauses, looks down, "that wasn't my thought."

“No,” Severus laughs. “It was mine.”

Harry presses his mouth to the curve of Severus’s throat. “*Christ*, what you do to me.” His voice is muffled. Severus’s loose hair tickles his cheek, his neck. “I had to sit through my faculty meeting yesterday and all I could think about was getting my hands on you again.” He laughs, kisses the spot behind Severus’s ear. “I actually got hard. Thought I was going to have to excuse myself.”

“Shit,” Severus says, shifting beneath him. He’s already breathing fast. “I would have liked to see that.”

“Me nearly embarrass myself in front of my colleagues?”

“Yes. And turnabout’s only fair, considering how many times I’ve had an erection in Defence this year.” Severus rocks up, cock pressed against Harry’s arse. “I could have you like this, yeah? Let you ride me until you come all over yourself.”

Harry groans, resting his forehead on Severus’s shoulder. His skin is warm, sticky against his. They’re in Severus’s bed in the Slytherin dormitory. It’s foolish—beyond foolish, really. But the dorm is empty; Severus is the only seventh year that’s stayed for Easter hols, and no one knows Harry is here. Minerva isn’t even at the castle now. She’s in Glasgow with her sister for the weekend. And Harry has done a lot of foolish things recently. What’s one more to add to the list?

Severus moves impossibly closer, pulling Harry against him. Harry’s straddling him, his legs spread over Severus’s thighs, and Severus’s hands are at Harry’s waist, fingers stroking over hipbones.

Harry’s cock throbs and he *wants* so badly.

Severus’s teeth nip Harry’s earlobe, as he rocks his hips under Harry, holding their bodies close together.

“Do you know how long I’ve wanted this?” Severus says. “To fuck you in my bed?”

Harry’s cock twitches where it’s pressed to Severus’s stomach and he laughs.

“How long?” Harry murmurs against Severus’s neck.

“October. The night of the Hallowe’en feast.”

“October? But I...we hadn’t—”

Severus kisses him. “I know . You hadn’t even so much as looked at me inappropriately yet. You were perfectly, entirely, *frustratingly* proper.”

“Until I wasn’t,” Harry gasps, mouth at Severus’s jaw, the line of his throat.

“Until you weren’t,” Severus agrees. “*God*, you fucking wished me back from the dead and it still took you five bloody months to realise you wanted me.”

“Not five,” Harry says, breathless and shaking. “I knew before then, *fuck*...” He’s cut off by Severus’s hand on his cock. His fingers are tight and hot, and he strokes him evenly, quickly, knowing exactly what Harry likes by now, down to the tiny swirl of his thumb against the wet slit. “Severus,” Harry says, his voice catching as Severus pushes his foreskin back, slides it over the

head again. Harry closes his eyes, listens to the ragged sound of his own breath. He knows Severus is watching him, knows he's getting even harder at the sight of his fingers on Harry's prick.

"If you don't stop that I'll come before you even get your cock in me," Harry gasps. *Fuck*, he's already so close.

"Good," Severus says, tightening his grip, pushing his hips up so Harry thrusts into Severus's fist. "Maybe I can get *you* off twice this time." He twists his wrist, kisses Harry again, and suddenly Harry is there. He can't stop it and he cries out, spunk spilling over Severus's hand, splattering on Severus's bare chest.

"So hot," Severus says against Harry's lips. He's still moving his hand, smearing come up and down Harry's softening prick. Harry shudders, rests his head against Severus's shoulder as he struggles to catch his breath.

"I've been thinking about it, though," Severus says. "Having you in my bed. I want to know—every night when I go to sleep next to my dorm mates—that I've had you right here. That I've made Professor Potter come all over my sheets."

"That's highly inappropriate," Harry manages.

"Are you going to take points?"

"No. You need to take these off, though." His hands are at Severus's waist, tugging at the flannel sleep pants he's got on. Severus groans, lifting his hips up, helping Harry slide them down and off his legs.

They end up on their sides, Severus pressed to Harry's back, bodies curved together as Severus thrusts into Harry. It's slow and intimate and Harry wants to remember this, the heat of their bodies together, the ache of his cock, the soft press of Severus's mouth against his shoulder, the nape of his neck. "This is...*fuck*. If anyone knew—"

"They won't." Severus has a hand on Harry's waist, fingers clenching against his hip, five hot points of pressure. He rocks into him, harder now. "They won't." Then Severus rolls Harry onto his stomach without even pulling out, thrusts into him, his body a solid, warm weight on top of him.

Each movement, each snap of Severus's hips presses Harry's cock into the mattress and, *god*, the friction feels amazing. "Yes," Harry breathes, turning his head to the side, bracing one hand against the headboard in front of him. "Yes."

Severus is breathing hard now, holding Harry to the bed, fucking him in quick, short thrusts, withdrawing just enough with each one to slide back in.

"Fuck, you've gotten good at this," Harry gasps, and Severus chuckles, breath warm against Harry's neck.

"I'm a quick study," he says. "You should know that by now, Professor."

"Yeah, just don't stop." Harry pushes his hips down again as Severus slides into him and he thinks he can come just like this, all over Severus's blankets without a hand on his cock. "Jesus, *right there*..."

Severus drops his head forward to rest on Harry's back. "God, you feel so good. You're so fucking tight for me and I could just—*oh...god I love you*—"

I love you.

He breaks off, hips jerking. And Harry can tell he's close, can tell from his short, shallow breaths, from the way his hand twists in the sheets by Harry's head. He's fighting to keep his movements controlled, but he's about to lose it and that's so fucking perfect it sends a shiver down Harry's spine.

"Will you come for me?" Severus says, voice breathless and ragged. "I want you to come when I'm inside you."

"Yes," Harry gasps. "*Yes.*" His prick is throbbing where it's pressed between his stomach and the bed, and then Severus is crying out, snapping his hips forward again, hard, and Harry can feel his cock pulsing and Harry knows Severus is coming right now and that thought alone is enough to send him over the edge. He grinds his hips down once more and he's shaking, muscles clenching, as he comes, cock spurting into the sheets as Severus shudders above him.

Harry wakes to green light filtering in through the window above the bed.

"I could get used to this." Severus is propped on his elbow looking down at him. "Waking up with you in my bed."

Harry shifts, turning into Severus's warmth, and he groans. He's sore. It's fantastic.

Severus frowns. "Are you all right?"

"Yes," Harry says, pressing a kiss to Severus's chest. "Brilliant." Then: "Did you mean it? What you said last night?"

Severus stiffens and, for a moment, Harry isn't sure if he's going to answer. But then he says, "I'm sorry if I upset you."

"You didn't upset me. Did you mean it?" Harry asks again carefully.

"Yes."

Harry nods. "I love you too."

Epilogue

"Well, it's done."

Harry looks up from the Quidditch magazine he's flipping through. "Yeah?"

Severus puts a hand on his shoulder, leans down to kiss the corner of his mouth. "I got the job. We're officially colleagues."

Harry turns, cupping Severus's face between his palms; he kisses him again.

Severus pulls away after a moment, propping his hip against the arm of Harry's chair. "She said I'd be the youngest professor Hogwarts has ever had...again."

Harry grins. "I think this calls for a celebration, *Professor Prince.*"

“Yeah? What do you have in mind?”

“Dinner to start,” Harry says. “Then sex. Or,” he reaches out, tugs Severus sideways into his lap. “Sex then dinner?”

“Ooff.” Severus sprawls back dramatically, but Harry pushes his hips up against Severus’s arse and Severus laughs. “Sex then dinner it is.”

“Yeah.”

The pub is busy, even for a Saturday. But Hermione managed to secure them a table in advance and the waitress motions Harry and Severus towards a booth in the back.

They’re the first ones here. Severus insisted they arrive early. ‘*You can’t be late to your own party, Harry.*’

Harry sits down. The booth is large, but Severus slides in close beside him, his body warm against Harry’s.

The waitress stops by to take their drink order then disappears back towards the bar.

“You okay?” Severus asks. He picks up the little card with the word *Reserved* scrawled on it that marked their table. “Or has the back pain started yet. I hear that’s a thing, you know. When you’re old.”

Harry kicks at his foot under the table, grinning. “I think I’ll manage.”

“Good.”

The waitress returns with their pints. She’s pretty with her dark hair piled on top of her head. Her white tank top is stretched tight across the swell of her breasts; Harry sees a peek of red lace when she leans over to set down their drinks.

“Anything else?” She smiles. Her lips are slicked with a glossy pink.

Harry shakes his head and she walks away.

“She thinks you’re terribly attractive,” Severus says. “Even with your ridiculous hair. Pity you’re bent.”

“Stay out of the waitress’s head, love. It’s rude.”

Severus shrugs unapologetically. “I hardly had to brush her with my magic. She’s projecting.” He looks sideways at Harry. “I imagine even you could read her.”

Harry laughs, taking Severus’s hand in his; he laces their fingers together. “She thought you were hot too.”

Severus rolls his eyes. “Only because she was thinking about us together.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

Harry sips at his beer. "Fuck."

Severus shifts against Harry so that their knees are pressed together, the warm length of his calf slots against Harry's beneath the table. He takes his hand, rests it on Harry's thigh.

Then Harry feels the touch of Severus's fingers, feather light, as they slide up the inseam of his jeans to settle just beneath his cock.

Harry's stomach tightens and he takes another swig of his drink to distract himself, but Severus's fingers are tracing small circles there and he knows Severus can feel his prick hardening.

Beer sloshes over the lip of his glass when he sets it down again. "Severus..." Harry says slowly, but he doesn't stop touching him. He doesn't even look at him. He's staring down at the list of pub specials and looking completely innocent, the bastard.

His thumb pops the button on Harry's flies.

Harry's breath catches. His fingers tighten around his glass as Severus slips a finger inside, strokes along the length of his prick over the fabric of his y-fronts.

Harry closes his eyes. He can't think with Severus's hands on him. There are people around them. The waitress is hovering nearby waiting for the rest of their party to arrive. And while Severus's hand is beneath the table, someone could still walk by, could still see what he's doing.

The thought is more arousing than it should be.

"You should stop," Harry says.

"Yes." But Severus's finger slips into his pants, touches bare skin, slides along Harry's now-hard prick. "Or I could see if I can get you off right here. Make you come before everyone gets here."

Harry closes his eyes, takes a steadying breath.

"What do you think?" Severus's touch is light, teasing, but it's enough to make Harry ache. "Should I take your cock out? I don't think it would take long. You're halfway there already."

"Could just leave," Harry says, far too breathless. "Say something came up."

Severus looks down at Harry's lap, continues to stroke his finger up and down inside his pants.

"Wouldn't be a lie, you know."

"No. But we shouldn't disappoint your friends."

"*Our* friends."

"Our friends," Severus concedes. "Besides, it'll be better this way. Get you all worked up. Make you want me."

"I already want you," Harry bites out as Severus tightens his fingers against his shaft. "Fuck."

"Harry, Severus!" Ron shouts from across the pub. And Harry stiffens, but Severus doesn't move his hand. Not yet. He presses his palm against Harry's erection. Harry curses under his breath and Severus just smirks as Ron and Hermione make their way to the table.

"Or should we say *Professor Prince*?" Hermione slides in across from Harry. Severus slips his

hand from Harry's pants, puts it back on Harry's leg as Ron sits down beside him.

"Neville and Hannah should be here any minute," Hermione says. "They were right behind us. Happy birthday, love." She reaches across the table to pat Harry's arm. "You're looking a little flushed. Are you all right?"

"Yeah," Harry says, elbowing Severus gently. The waitress appears then. "I just need another drink."

Before she finishes taking their orders, Hannah and Neville are there.

"Sorry we're late!" Hannah says, setting her handbag on the table and taking the seat next to Hermione. Her husband slides in beside her, putting a bottle of whisky in front of Harry. "Ogden's finest," she says. "You're ridiculously easy to buy for."

"That's because his tastes are ridiculously plebeian," Severus says.

"Oi!" Harry says. "You're one to talk. Never complain about my Firewhisky when you're raiding my liquor cupboard."

Severus got a little succulent for Neville. It just looks like a tiny purple cactus to Harry, but he's assured him it has fancy magical properties and, judging by the way Neville's face lights up when he sees it, Severus knew what he was talking about.

"Brilliant, mate," he says with a smile, petting the little plant carefully with his thumb. It wriggles under his touch.

"Who's watching the Leaky tonight?" Ron asks.

"Sean," Hannah says. "I'm free until twelve, but we should be back for closing time."

"So it's official," Neville says then, looking at Severus. "We're all colleagues?" Neville took over the Herbology post when Pomona finally retired the year before.

"Yes," Harry says, looking at Severus fondly. "Colleagues."

The waitress returns with their drinks and Hermione raises her glass. "To professors Potter, Prince, and Longbottom. And to our birthday boys, of course. Who've finally decided to join us at thirty."

Harry takes a swallow of his drink. Presses his foot against Severus's under the table.

"How are your rooms?" Hermione asks Severus. "Are you settling in?"

Severus nods. His new rooms are in the dungeons, though they're not the same ones his former self had. After the war, after his death, Minerva found that Snape's rooms were simply...gone.

Hogwarts has always had ways of adjusting to suit its residents and it seemed fitting that the castle would react to the death of its Headmaster in this way.

In the following weeks, during reconstruction, a new Potions office and quarters appeared adjacent from where Snape's had been.

And now, once Minerva hired Severus to take over the upper level Potions classes from O'Connor, another office and adjoining rooms materialised at the opposite end of the hall.

"You didn't just want to move right in with Harry?" Neville smiles.

"Best not make it obvious that Harry's shagging the new Potions professor," Ron says with a grin.

“And that he was doing so before he even took the post.” He laughs. “*Well* before he took the post.”

“Hey, hey,” Harry says. “I assure you he was properly eighteen.”

“And had finished school,” Hermione adds.

“Er...” Harry ducks his head.

“Harry!” Hermione looks scandalised.

He just shrugs. “He was eighteen!”

They drink. Ron orders a plate of chips for the table. Harry leans against Severus’s side, listens to the conversation around him.

They’ve kept their circle of friends small. Harry and Severus prefer it that way and they’re happy. Though it’s been nearly three years since Severus arrived in this timeline, there are still very few people that know. The staff at Hogwarts, naturally. Ron and Hermione. The rest of the Weasleys. Neville and Hannah. Luna and her husband, and maybe a handful more. Severus has always been a private person and, in this case, exercising caution, discretion is vital.

Before Severus had finished his seventh year, before he left the relative safety of Hogwarts, Harry had gone to Kingsley.

It was time.

They knew he wasn’t going back, and apprising the Minister of the situation was necessary moving forward.

Documentation was easy. Kingsley saw that the appropriate forms were filed in the Department of Records. Severus has a birth certificate now reading 6 January 1990 and everything needed to prove his British citizenship in the Muggle world.

But his anonymity was another thing.

It was Hermione who devised the magic. She’d been thinking about it for months—since it became clear Severus would stay.

They used a variation of a secret keeping spell.

Concealment and disillusionment charms are unsustainable. That type of magic is fine for a temporary situation. To avoid notice in a crowd or for privacy when out in public. But it’s not practical or effective for long term, daily use.

Secret keeping spells, once anchored, do not require continuous maintenance, not do they hinge on physical concealment alone. But those spells are traditionally tied to locations, not people. So, not only did they need to come up with a way to attach the magic to Severus’s person—to account for physical appearance and characteristics, behaviour, mannerisms, and speech patterns—but they also had to account for his magic. Because, after all, anyone who truly knew Severus Snape—who might recognise his younger self all these years later—might also remember his magic.

It was genius, really, Hermione’s spellwork. And while her status as an Unspeakable allowed them to perform the magic away from the scrutiny and general restrictions of the Ministry, such magic does not go unnoticed. So Kingsley made sure there would be no record of it.

And the wish magic itself is curious. It seems there was always intent to conceal woven into the intricacies of the spell.

It makes sense. After all, Harry meant to save Severus's life. And that end is best achieved the less people know Severus Snape is alive.

They've been to the Burrow. Half a dozen or more times by now. But Harry remembers their first visit as if it were yesterday. The first Christmas they were together. Severus's first year in graduate school.

They'd been careful—they still are. Even with Hermione's magic and Kingsley's concealment charms, they avoid places Severus could potentially be recognised, remembered. It's one of the reasons he completed his mastery abroad. But they'd Apparated to the Burrow that day, and Harry—hand on Severus's back, Ron and Hermione at their side—had walked into the kitchen to greet Molly.

She frowned. Looked at him for a long moment, brow furrowed as though trying to remember. "Severus," she said. "We used to know someone by that name, didn't we Arthur?" And Ron had looked to Harry and Harry nodded.

"It's Severus Snape, Mum," he'd said. "Well, Severus Prince now. But he's alive. Harry wished him back and he's all right. A bit younger now," he added with a laugh, bumping his shoulder into Harry's. "But all right, and Harry's brought him for Christmas."

Then Molly had blinked and looked at them as though a fog had lifted. She pulled him into a warm hug and Severus had endured it admirably before Molly released him and Ron handed him a beer.

The waitress reappears, this time holding a platter with a cake. *Happy Birthday Harry and Neville!* is written across it in red icing.

"I didn't know we had cake," Neville grins.

"Hermione ordered it," Hannah says. "You can't have a party without cake."

She glances around before lighting the candles with a discreet flick of her wand. "Now boys, make a—"

"I'm going to stop you right there," Ron says, holding up a hand. "Neville, by all means, make your wish, but Harry's wishing privileges have been permanently revoked."

Harry laughs. Severus has an arm around his waist, hand resting on his hip. "He's right. No more wishing for me. But that's okay, I don't need any more wishes." Harry turns his head, presses a kiss to Severus's temple. "The most important one already came true."

Severus looks at him. "That is..."

"So, so sweet," Hannah supplies, beaming.

"I was going to say nauseatingly sentimental," Severus says. "But seeming as how I benefitted from your stupidly powerful wishing abilities, I suppose I can't complain. But I agree with Ron. No more wishes. Can't have you conjuring up any more underage paramours."

"I thought we established that you weren't underage?" Harry says.

"Student lovers, then."

“Nah. I realised professors are more my thing.” Harry smiles widely at Severus. “And I’ve already got one of those.” He takes a sip of his beer. “It’s something we have in common, you know.” Harry waggles his eyebrows at Severus.

Severus rolls his eyes. “Merlin, what I put up with.” But he takes Harry’s hand, squeezing it.

Hermione cuts the cake.

It’s good. Chocolate with raspberry filling.

They order another round and talk about Quidditch, the new case Ron is working, and the magical plumbing problems Hannah’s been dealing with at the Leaky.

It’s nice here, with his friends, with Severus. Harry leans against his side half listening as Ron details why the Cannons, against all odds, might have a shot this year.

“Should we tell him?” Severus asks in a stage whisper.

“What?” Harry says. “That all the wish magic in the world couldn’t help the Cannons to a winning season?”

“Hey!” Ron says and Harry laughs.

“No, let a man dream.”

“And on that note,” Hannah says, “I need to get back to my own pub. “Happy Birthday Harry.”

They say their goodbyes.

“We should be going too,” Hermione says. “Shouldn’t keep the minder too late.”

“Thanks for the cake. And the drinks.” Harry smiles, holding up his nearly empty pint.

“Anytime, mate.” Ron stands, taking Hermione’s hand to help her out of her seat. “Lunch next week? I can come to Hogwarts, or we can try that new place in Diagon.”

“Yeah.” Harry nods. “Sounds good.”

They watch as Hermione and Ron make their way to the door. Severus puts his hand on Harry’s thigh.

“Ready to go?”

He takes the last sip of his beer. “Maybe. Or we could have another drink. It is my birthday after all.”

“Yes.” Severus slides his hand down to Harry’s knee, then back up again. “But I’ve been thinking about sucking you off for the past hour and it’s making me hard. Can’t do that here.”

Harry swallows. “Yeah?”

Severus takes Harry’s hand in his, presses his palm to his crotch. Harry can feel Severus’s erection, swollen and hard and pulling at the buttons of his flies.

“Yes. So I’d like to take you home. See how quickly I can make you come. Then I think I’ll fuck you.” He pushes down on Harry’s hand again. Harry squeezes his fingers, and Severus rocks into

the touch. Harry has to resist the urge to stroke him off right here.

Severus groans. “Or you can fuck me. That would be good too.”

“No, tonight I want you inside me.”

“Right. Shall we?”

Harry nods and Severus stands, not even attempting to conceal the way his cock is tenting his trousers.

Harry slides out of the booth, leaning up to press a quick kiss to Severus’s cheek.

“Fuck, I love you.”

“I know.” Harry smiles, takes his hand to lead him out of the pub. “And to think, I wasn’t supposed to get any wishes for my birthday.”

End Notes

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